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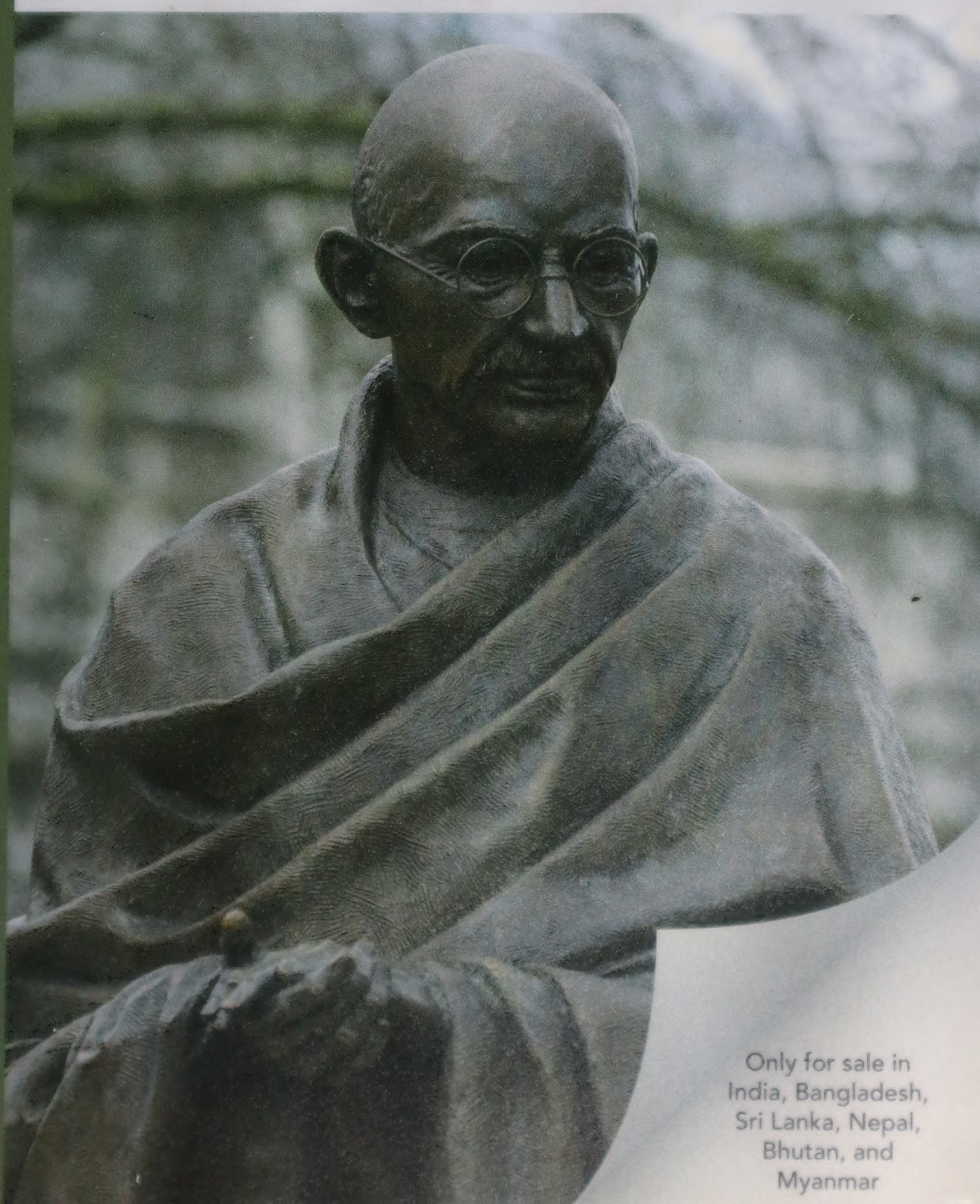
# PAX GANDHIANA

## The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi

ANTHONY J. PAREL



Notwithstanding his contributions to religion, nonviolence, civil rights, and civil disobedience, among other areas, Gandhi's most significant contribution is that as a political philosopher. While he is not often treated as such, Gandhi was, as Anthony J. Parel argues, a political philosopher sui generis, both in his philosophical method of constant self-criticism and his framework of philosophical analysis. Gandhi wrote daily on politics, but he did so as an activist; political philosophy was to him not just a way of understanding truths of political phenomena but was directly related to understanding those truths in action. If realized in action these truths would give rise to new political institutions, which in turn would create a corresponding peaceful political and social order. Parel dubs this order *Pax Gandhiana*.

The main contention of *Pax Gandhiana* is that peace cannot be achieved by politics alone. Peace requires the confluence of the canonical ends of life: politics and economics (artha), ethics (dharma), forms of pleasure (kama), and the pursuit of spiritual transcendence (moksha). Modern political philosophy isolates politics from the other three ends, but Gandhi's originality, according to Parel, lies in the way that he brings all four together. In fact Gandhi's political philosophy is relevant not only to India but also to the rest of the world: it is a new type of sovereignty that harmonizes the interest of individual states with the community of states.

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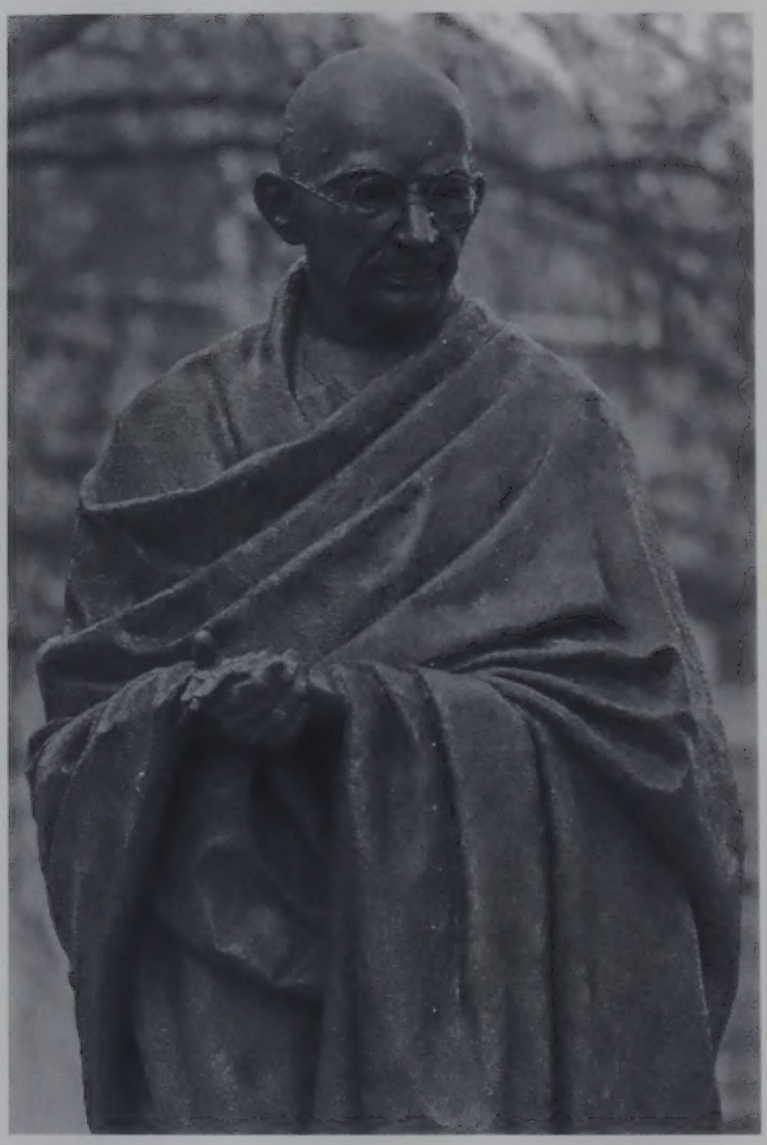
# Pax Gandhiana



Bronze statue of Gandhi by the British sculptor Philip Jackson. Installed in Parliament Square, London, in 2015, Jackson was inspired by a 1931 photo of Gandhi taken at the 10 Downing Street office of the British prime minister. Parliament Square is also home to the statues of Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela, Benjamin Disraeli, Lloyd George and Robert Peel. (Rex Features via AP Images)

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## *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*

**ANTHONY J. PAREL**

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# PREFACE

After decades devoted to the study of Mahatma Gandhi's life and writings, I have come to the conclusion that his most valuable contribution to India and the world is his political philosophy. Its fundamental teaching is that the peaceful political order—Pax Gandhiana—cannot be achieved by politics alone. It requires the confluence of the canonical ends of life—ethics (dharma), economic prosperity and democratic politics (artha), forms of pleasure (kama), and the pursuit of spiritual transcendence (moksha). Modern political philosophy isolates politics from all the other ends of life. Gandhi corrects this error. Therein lie his originality and importance.

Politics, insofar as it is a part of artha, belongs to the sphere of interests and violence. Dharma, kama, and the pursuit of moksha, on the other hand, belong to the sphere of nonviolence. In Gandhi's interpretation, these ends must not operate in isolation from one another. Therefore, politics, which belongs to the sphere of interests and violence, must act in coordination with the nonviolent ends of the other three. This coordination, which is mandatory, imposes an intrinsic limitation on the kind of violence that artha exercises. The nonviolence that Gandhi stipulates is civic, not monastic, and compatible with the coercive state. The mandatory coordination also stipulates that the means of politics be ethically good, that the rights be coordinated with duties, that the state renounce war as policy, and that the civic virtues of the citizen supplement the legitimacy of the state.

Gandhi's political philosophy in its depth is concerned more with this confluence and coordination than with anticolonialism, the attainment

of India's political independence, or even nonviolence and satyagraha. These are of course very important to him. We know this from history. After all, he invented satyagraha, and made nonviolence the leitmotif of his anticolonial campaign. Nevertheless, there is one thing that is even more important to him. That one thing is the social and political transformation of India brought about by the positive interactions between the political, economic, ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual ends of life. Civic nonviolence will be part of this transformation; without this transformation nonviolence will remain merely monastic. With this transformation, India will have a peaceful political order—Pax Gandhiana. Without it, India will have only modern, not Gandhian, politics. The confluence of, and the coordination between the canonical ends of life make the difference.

A critical reading of Gandhi's writings reveals that the taproot of his political philosophy reaches the fertile soil of his modern version of the Indian theory of the four ends of life—the *purusharthas*. There is therefore reason to believe that it provides the best conceptual framework for the study of his political philosophy. My concern in this book is not to ask what the best conceptual framework is to write a biography of Gandhi or a history of his achievements. My sole concern here is to ask what the best conceptual framework is for the study of his political philosophy. That framework, to repeat, is supplied by his modern version of the theory of the canonical ends of human life.

The reformulation of the traditional *purushartha*-theory was long overdue. For centuries the ascetic trend in Indian civilization had succeeded in elevating world-renunciation as the only worthwhile goal of life, and the yogi the ideal human type to emulate. One of the consequences of this mode of thought was the devaluation of the political and the economic order, and the overvaluation of mysticism. What in the original vision was supposed to work interactively was now made to work in oppositional ways. The major Indian figure who succeeded in changing this sad state of affairs—in theory as well as in practice—was Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi maintains that the good life, far from requiring world-renunciation, requires world-affirmation and world-engagement, and that

the pursuit of the canonical ends of life in its modernized form is open to all Indians—regardless of religion, caste, ethnicity, or class. His ascetic lifestyle is entirely personal to him, and not for emulation by others; neither does it define his political philosophy.

Gandhi is aware that making ethics, wealth, political power, pleasure, and spirituality function cooperatively is no easy task. He readily accepts that life as given has its problems—violence, untruth, greed, envy, laziness, gluttony, lust, religious hatred—to mention a few. But life is also purposive. Striving to solve these problems as best as one can gives life meaning and direction. But the good life, as he visualizes it, will require a moral transformation of individual citizens, and a structural transformation of society.

The difficulties of implementing individual moral transformation should be addressed, he believes, by engaging in good economic and political activities, certain spiritual exercises such as daily meditation, and above all, by the practice of certain civic virtues. There are eleven of them in his political lexicon: truth, nonviolence, courage or fearlessness, celibacy or the ability to manage the sexual instinct, nonstealing or control over the possessive instinct, control over greed or the acquisitive instinct, control over the palate, manual labour, swadeshi (neighborliness, regard for the things of one's own country), opposition to Untouchability and the caste system in general, and a deep respect for all religions. Without the habitual practice of these civic virtues moral and personal self-transformation will be virtually impossible.

The structural transformation of society and polity requires the creation of appropriate political and economic institutions, legal processes and procedures, and the involvement of nonviolent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in the sort of activities envisaged in *Constructive Programme.*

Here we come face to face with an academic issue. Assuming that the modern version of the theory of the ends of human life provides the right conceptual framework for the study of Gandhi's political philosophy, what about the other intellectual frameworks within which he is so often studied? He can be, indeed has been and continues to be, studied from within

many different intellectual frameworks. Thus there are today the Marxist, the socialist, the liberal, the nationalist, the Freudian, the feminist, and the postmodern frameworks of studying him, in addition to the postcolonial frameworks derived from Gramsci and a multitude of theories of literary criticism traced to such figures as Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault. There are, it seems, as many Gandhis as there are intellectual frameworks within which he is studied. M. N. Roy's Marxist framework gives us the picture of a bourgeois Gandhi. Bipan Chandra's nationalist framework presents him as a strategist of the Indian national liberation movement. In Arundhati Roy's framework, he appears to be a defender of the caste system, if not a racist. In Faisal Devji's conceptual framework Gandhi appears as "the impossible Indian." As Makarand Paranjape points out, the intellectual framework of Nathuram Godse, Gandhi's assassin, led him to perceive Gandhi as a threat to Hindus, and therefore fully deserving of what Antony Copley calls, an "Oedipal murder." The list of academic Gandhis can indeed be long.

There is no doubt that the multidisciplinary frameworks of studying Gandhi have contributed, and will continue to contribute, greatly to our knowledge. Sometimes such knowledge can be favorable to his political philosophy; at other times it can be critical of if not totally hostile to it. Whatever their impact on his political philosophy, this knowledge explosion is to be welcomed.

But the question remains: What are we to make of the contradictory images of Gandhi that emerge from such frameworks? Should *Gandhi's own framework*—if we may thus call the framework derived from the reformed version of the theory of the ends of life—be allowed to act as a reference point to test the balance or imbalance, fairness or bias, adequacy or inadequacy of the different images of Gandhi presented? I must emphasize that *Gandhi's own framework* is not something that I am imposing on his writings, but something that I have discovered from studying them. All the same, the question is worth raising as to whether by giving an umpiring role to *Gandhi's own framework* we are unduly privileging it. The readers of this book are invited to answer this question for themselves. They are also invited to decide what the correct relationship should

be between *Gandhi's own framework* and the frameworks that scholars have constructed to achieve their own purposes.

Now to the advantages that accrue from studying Gandhi from within his own conceptual framework. First, his conceptual framework enables the reader to see how the seemingly discordant elements of his political philosophy can constitute a concordant whole, and how his inconsistencies, which abound in his writings, can be reconciled where reconciliation is possible, or criticized, where criticism is due. Over a period of half a century, he wrote different things at different times about the same things. Nothing is easier than to quote Gandhi against Gandhi—a favorite pastime of those unsympathetic to him. Second, an awareness of the existence of his framework can bring balance and measure to a given interpretation of Gandhi. Third, it can allow an intelligent way of citing his opinions. Again, nothing is easier than to cite him to validate virtually any argument you make. But an awareness of his conceptual framework can bring discipline to the process. Finally, it can help the reader to see how in his political philosophy rights are compatible with duties, nonviolence with the coercive state, the right to private property with the duty to contribute to the common good, and the pursuit of wealth, power, and pleasure with the pursuit of a decent ethical and spiritual life.

In 2007, the United Nations declared October 2, Gandhi's birthday, International Day of Nonviolence. And rightly so. There is no doubt that historically nonviolence occupies a key position in Gandhi's political philosophy. At the same time, his conceptual framework may legitimately question the philosophical, as distinct from the historical, justification for this. Seen from the perspective of his conceptual framework, it is not difficult to see why nonviolence, though very important, is only one of the eleven civic virtues, and that it cannot succeed in what it wants to accomplish without the support of the other ten. I think it will do his political philosophy a lot of good if it is emancipated from the monopolistic hold that *absolute* nonviolence tends to seek over it. It is fair to say that *absolute* nonviolence is not Gandhi's greatest contribution to political philosophy. That honor, I think, goes to his fundamental teaching that the good life depends on the confluence of, and

the coordination between the canonical ends of human life. Everyone who adopts his political philosophy therefore should try to bring about that confluence and that coordination not only in personal life but also in civic life, and in the life of public institutions, and culture itself. Whether he favors liberalism or socialism or something else can be debated ad nauseam. The critical question for Gandhi (and for us) is whether politics and economics can deal with the real issues of daily life, and whether the material basis of life can be maintained without undermining life's ethical basis and spiritual aspirations.

Most of modern Western political philosophy no longer cares for the sort of confluence and coordination that Gandhi seeks, except perhaps for utilitarian reasons. Western modernity, for the most part, appears satisfied with the relentless pursuit of political power, wealth, and pleasure on the basis of the assurances given by a self-sufficient secular humanism. Gandhi's political philosophy explains why such a narrow approach to the good life is inadequate in view of all the options open to humanity.

It goes without saying that knowledge of the conceptual framework is necessary to understand any great political thinker. Understanding political thinkers as they understood themselves is always a good starting point for studying them. As the framework, so the political philosophy. "Cherchez la framework" is the rule here. This applies especially to Gandhi's case, as he did not do political philosophy systematically. That is all the more reason why we should at some stage try to understand his conceptual framework—for it reveals the underlying system.

Gandhi's political philosophy is not a collection of disjointed political ideas, but an organic whole. When its ideas are implemented, they can create a peaceful social, economic, and political order—Pax Gandhiana. Hopefully, these essays can benefit those interested not only in Gandhi but also in the intellectual history of South Asia and South Africa, colonial history, postcolonial studies, and comparative political philosophy.

Calgary, October 2, 2015

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# Pax Gandhiana

# 1

# Introduction

The focus of the following essays is on Gandhi as primarily a political philosopher. Although he has made significant contributions to several other fields of human endeavor—religion, nonviolence, satyagraha, and the constructive program, for example—the contributions he made to the field of Indian political philosophy have been the most significant and also the most original. But he is a political philosopher sui generis. He did political philosophy in his own way. Sir Richard Sorabji's recent book compares him to the ancient Stoic philosophers and demonstrates convincingly that he is indeed a philosopher. As evidence he points to Gandhi's philosophical *method*—the method of submitting "his views to relentless criticism, sometimes his own, but more often that of other people."[1] Sorabji is quite right here. However, there is more to Gandhi's

1. Richard Sorabji, *Gandhi and the Stoics: Modern Experiments in Ancient Values* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 1 and 201. See also Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi's Integrity: The Philosophy behind the Politics." *Postcolonial Studies* 5 (1), 2002, pp. 79–93.

philosophy than its *method*: There is also its *framework* of philosophical analysis, which as I argue in this volume, he produced out of his reinterpretation of the old theory of the ends of life, the *purusharthas*. Taken together, his method and his framework make him not only a philosopher but also, and especially, a *political philosopher*—the most original of its type in modern Indian intellectual history.

Throughout his political career—spanning over half a century—Gandhi wrote almost daily on politics and related subjects. But he never wrote about them in a systematic way, as philosophers ordinarily tend to do. He wrote about them as a political activist would. He had to respond to daily events as they occurred. The underlying philosophy had to explain the shifting events. Hence the lack of system in his philosophical writings. Despite this, a coherent philosophy guided his intellect. He even invented some political vocabulary—"satyagraha" being the most famous. He left it to political philosophers to decipher what that philosophy was and give it the proper systematic form that it deserved. The succession of the political weeklies that he edited—*Indian Opinion* in South Africa, and *Young India, Navajivan*, and *Harijan* in India—are read even today as primary sources of his political philosophy and will continue to be read in the foreseeable future.

## GANDHI AND MACHIAVELLI

The only political philosopher that I can think of who is comparable to Gandhi in this regard is Machiavelli.[2] Of course they lived in different epochs of history and in different cultural environments. Yet there are some noteworthy similarities and equally noteworthy differences between them that are worthy of our attention. The comparison throws a useful light on aspects of Gandhi's fundamental political principles.

As for the similarities, both were political philosophers who were essentially political activists not trained formally in political philosophy.

2. See Anthony J. Parel, *The Machiavellian Cosmos* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

Yet what they wrote on politics had great influence on posterity. Both wrote when their respective countries were internally divided and more or less under foreign subjugation. The passionate desire to unify and liberate their countries found expression in their famous works, *The Prince* (1513) and *Hind Swaraj* (*Indian Home Rule*) (1909). Each also wrote more reflective works, such as *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy* (reflections on the rise and fall of the Roman Republic), and *Discourses on the Gita* (reflections on how a great ancient text can be interpreted to make plenty of sense in modern times). Both were also innovators, in their own way, of their inherited political philosophies. Whether one likes it or not, one cannot adequately study modern Western political philosophy without studying Machiavelli, and the study of modern Indian political philosophy is incomplete without studying Gandhi.

The dissimilarities between them are no doubt more important, and are as striking as they are fundamental. Simone Panter-Brick brought them to our attention half a century ago.[3] No one interested in the comparative study of the political philosophies of East and West can afford to ignore the differences between Gandhi and Machiavelli. Indeed, the dissimilarities between them give us a deeper understanding of the main differences between modern Western political philosophy and modern Indian political philosophy.

To begin with, there are their contrasting positions on the relationship of tradition to modernity in political philosophy. Their respective positions on this issue affect almost everything else in their thought. Machiavelli states his position in chapter 15 of *The Prince*. He rejects the general agreement that had existed in the Western tradition up to this time that the ethic of "what is done" and the ethic of "what should be done" may not be radically separated. Plato, Aristotle, and others in the tradition would never sacrifice "what should be done" in the interest of "what is done." Not so Machiavelli: He is prepared to make the sacrifice. The truth that matters in politics according to him is "effectual truth"

3. Simone Panter-Brick, *Gandhi against Machiavellism* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1966).

(*verità effettuale*)—the truth that serves the interest of raison d'état. Privileging this truth has dire consequences—it can justify any evil done in the name of the state. "Hence it is necessary to a prince, if he wants to maintain himself," he writes, "to learn to be able not to be good, and use this and not use it according to necessity."[4]

Now what is Gandhi's truth and its relation to politics? He states his case in the famous Introduction to his *Autobiography*—among other places. The state and its politics are of course necessary for human well-being, but they are not sufficient. Along with artha, human well-being needs dharma, kama, and moksha also. There is therefore no way of making raison d'état the highest human good. The highest human good is spiritual liberation; but it cannot be achieved, holds Gandhi, unless one enters into the field of politics—implying that there is a connection between the field of politics and that of spiritual liberation, between "what is done" and "what should be done," and between "the relative truth" (*apne kalpelu satya*) pursued in politics and "the absolute truth" (*swatantra chirastayi satya*) pursued in spiritual liberation. Gandhi only updates the tradition, and, unlike Machiavelli, does not abolish it altogether. For Gandhi updating involves substituting the sannyasi path to moksha with the civic path. He felt it his duty "to augment the legacy of our ancestors and to change it into current coin and make it acceptable to the present age."[5] He seeks to make tradition compatible with modernity (to the extent possible), but unlike Machiavelli he is not prepared to reject it in favor of modernity.

The second important issue on which Gandhi and Machiavelli disagree concerns the relationship of ends and means in politics, which many philosophers consider a fundamental, if not *the* fundamental question in political philosophy. Machiavelli in the famous chapter 18 of *The Prince* asserts that the end justifies the means: "in the actions of all men, especially

4. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey Mansfield Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 61.

5. M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 100 vols. (New Delhi: Publication Division, Government of India, 1958–1994 (hereafter *CW*), 51, p. 259.

of princes, where there is no court to appeal to, one looks to the end."[6] The Italian original, to be fair to him, is *si guarda al fine* ("one looks to the end"). The English translations often render this as "the end justifies the means." However that might be, the linguistic difference here does not in any way distort the basic meaning of author's contention, which is that in political action the end does, and indeed should, justify the means, especially if the end is national interest or raison d'état. The basis for saying this is that according to Machiavelli there is no higher court to appeal to, that is, there is no binding higher moral law that the politician acting in the name of national interest has to obey. The critical point here is his denial of the binding force of a higher moral law on the laws of politics. Given the refusal of politicians to admit the existence of such a law, the best they can do is to try to be good when possible, and to know how "to enter into evil," when necessary. In other words, raison d'état lies outside the domain of a higher moral law. That is why politicians should feel free to use any means whatsoever, regardless of its moral value.

Now if we open chapter 16 of *Hind Swaraj*, we see an entirely different approach to the same issue. The belief that "there is no connection between the means and the end is a great mistake," writes Gandhi. "The means may be likened to a seed and the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree." We cannot, for example, grow "a rose through planting a noxious weed." "We reap exactly as we sow." It is not at all surprising that in the same chapter Gandhi should reject the principle of national interest (*prajano swarth*) as the *ultimate* guide to state conduct.[7]

Gandhi's position on the question of ends and means is the most important idea that his political disciples learned from him. The testimony of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, should suffice: "The most important thing he [Gandhi] insisted upon was the importance of the means: ends were shaped by the means that led to them, and therefore

6. *The Prince*, p. 71.

7. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony J. Parel (hereafter *HS*) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 79–85.

the means had to be good, pure, and truthful. That is what we learnt from him and it is well we did so."[8]

The reason why means are morally inseparable from the end is that unlike Machiavelli, Gandhi does not radically separate moral virtue from political virtue. The Florentine separated the two, calling political virtue (*virtù*) anything that served reason of state. There is, in Machiavelli's view, a direct link between reason of state and *virtù*. Living in a prosperous, powerful, and imperial state, and contributing to its success are for him the key to a fulfilled life. This is why he is so fascinated by the history of Rome and the Pax Romana that it inaugurated. In the Roman scheme of things armed conquest came first and law only afterward, and that only to formalize the fruits of conquest. For Gandhi, the Roman model is totally unacceptable. Civic or political virtue must be in a working relationship with moral virtue. True, moral virtue and civic virtue for him are not exactly the same thing, for the reason that artha is not exactly the same as dharma. But being distinct does not mean that one could be ignored or violated in the interest of the other. Gandhi's philosophical presupposition is that there is a working relationship between political virtue and moral virtue, a presupposition based on his belief in the working relationship between the ends of life. It is the task of the citizen and the statesman and indeed of political culture itself to encourage everyone to acquire the practical skills necessary for maintaining a working relationship between political virtue and moral virtue in actual behavior. For Gandhi the key to a fulfilled life is the coordinated pursuit of all the ends of life. Unlike Machiavelli, he does not, and will not, isolate and exalt artha above the others.

This brings us to the third fundamental difference between Machiavelli and Gandhi. It concerns the question of whether the state and its interests embodied in its laws represent the ultimate human value, and whether they alone are sufficient for the good life. Put differently, whether humans can live by secularism alone. Machiavelli's position is clear enough. For him the ultimate goal in life is to live in, and to dedicate oneself to, a prosperous, powerful, and conquering state. Moral virtue, as we saw above, has only a subservient role to play here, if any: subservient to the state and

8. R. K. Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr. Nehru* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 25.

its laws. Thus it is more important for those engaged in politics to appear to be virtuous than to be really virtuous, because being really virtuous can sometimes come into conflict with the state and its ends.

The same was also true of religion. Machiavelli welcomes it as an instrument of the state. But it is not valuable in itself, independently of the state. That is why he feels more comfortable with the pagan cults of ancient Rome than with Christianity, which drew a clear line between what is God's and what is Caesar's.

For Gandhi religion covers part of what he calls dharma and the whole of what he calls the pursuit of moksha. Dharma as moral virtue has a transcendent foundation, emphasizing the element of duty in human behavior. Dharma contributes to an inner felicity very similar to the felicity derived from the pursuit of moksha. Moral virtues facilitate the practice of political virtue. This is especially true of the civic virtue of nonviolence. Dharma in the sense of duty also facilitates the realization of the values represented by unalienable human rights. Gandhi refuses to disconnect the province of rights from that of duty.

Organized religion for Gandhi is both a personal and a social matter. As a personal matter it is identical with the pursuit of spiritual excellence as outlined in the *Gita*, Patanjali's *Yogasutra*, and the scriptures of all organized religions. As a social phenomenon religion gives moral guidance to its followers as well as a sense of group identity. Plurality of religions for him is not only a historical fact but also a theological postulate. Historical religions are different roads leading to the same destination, namely, spiritual liberation. As such, organized religion deserves the respect of everyone who professes any religion, regardless of theological differences.

Gandhi strongly defends secularism; but he has his own version of it. Secularism for him is primarily a constitutional principle defining the secular character of the state. His secularism therefore is not a part of an all-embracing theory of a self-sufficient humanism. Because of his theory of the ends of life, he cannot even imagine that a self-sufficient humanism is possible, let alone capable of fulfilling all human desires and needs. To be truly fulfilled, one must pursue all four canonical aims of life. This means that when one actually pursues artha, one ipso facto is pursuing

secularism also—though only as a constitutional principle. Again, thanks to his theory of the ends of life, his brand of secularism recognizes the need for the nonsecular values lying outside the sphere of artha. The picture that we get in Gandhi, then, is completely different from the one that we get in Machiavelli. The state and its interests for Gandhi are of course necessary but not sufficient for a well-ordered life. Satyagraha underlines the philosophic limitations of the modern state. There is a law higher than that of the state; it is because of this that the citizen, through satyagraha, may, indeed must, resist a grossly erring state.

Finally, the question of the place of violence and nonviolence in politics: Two more contrasting political philosophers can hardly be found outside the circle of Machiavelli and Gandhi. To take Machiavelli first, arms are for him the principal foundation of all states and their politics—law being only the secondary foundation. Chapters 6 and 7 of *The Prince* give a succinct exposition of this thesis. All great founders of states—Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus—were great because they adhered to this thesis. Even the unsuccessful ones such as Cesare Borgia, whose unspeakable use of force is described in chapter 7, is endorsed by him because he at least tried to follow the right principles of (Machiavellian) politics. The famous conclusion drawn is that "armed prophets" win and "unarmed ones" lose. The litmus test of success in the use of force is whether force succeeds in compelling the compliance of your opponents. All new political founders, or revolutionaries as we call them today, have to force their opponents in the Machiavellian way. "And thus things must be ordered in such a mode that when they [the opponents] no longer believe, one can make them believe by force." [9] This is what all empire builders, past and present, in their different ways do, or attempt to do. Even Lord John Morley (1838–1923) and before him, Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859)—both admirers of Machiavelli and also involved in running an empire—understood him well on this point. As Morley puts it, "material force" is "the master-key to civil policy."[10]

9. *The Prince*, p. 24.

10. John Morley, *Machiavelli* (London: Macmillan, 1897), p. 27; Macaulay, *Essay on Machiavelli* (1850); for his brand of Machiavellism, see Robert E. Sullivan, *Macaulay: The Tragedy of Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

In resisting Pax Britannica, Gandhi resists the Machiavellism of his day. Little did he know that satyagraha would one day emerge as his response to Machiavellian *virtù*. *Hind Swaraj* takes up the concepts of brute force (also called "body force") and soul force in chapters 16 and 17. Violence or brute force has its root in body force, and nonviolence or satyagraha has its root in soul force. Both forces are operative forces of the actual empirical acting agent, who by nature is a body-soul composite. These two forces operate in society and polity as well. The norm, however, is that soul force should have precedence over body force. Thus the state may use coercive force only within the bounds determined by a just Constitution. When the state exceeds the constitutional bounds, soul force comes into play, as happens in satyagraha. Thus what we see in *Hind Swaraj* is Gandhi's reversal of the Machiavellian order of precedence: Force must be at the service of law, and not the other way around.

The brief comparison between Machiavelli and Gandhi puts in sharp relief the contrast between Pax Gandhiana and Machiavellism.

## PAX GANDHIANA AND PAX BRITANNICA

Gandhi uses the phrase "Pax Britannica" at least twice: once in *Hind Swaraj*, and again in a private letter of October 30, 1909 to Lord Ampthill, a former governor of Madras (1900–1906) and a former acting-viceroy (1904). It appears that Gandhi is reserved about its benefits. "I think a great deal too much is being made of *Pax Britannica*," he wrote frankly to Ampthill.[11] And he expressed a similar sentiment a month later in *Hind Swaraj*:

> READER: Then you will contend that the *Pax Britannica* is a useless encumbrance?
>
> EDITOR: You may see peace if you like. I see none.[12]

11. *HS*, p. 134.

12. *HS*, p. 43.

The kind of the relationship that existed between Gandhi and Ampthill is worth noticing, especially in the light of the imperial mores of the day. It tells us something about Ampthill's treatment of Gandhi as a person and a colonial subject, and Gandhi's attitude toward Ampthill as a prominent member of the imperial establishment. This relatively unknown Indian lawyer from South Africa felt free to share his innermost political ideas, soon to be published in his own book (*Hind Swaraj*) on topics as varied as swaraj, Indian politics, Indian nationalism, terrorist violence, religion, satyagraha, civilization, Pax Britannica, and the like.

Already by August 26, 1909, Ampthill had completed his Introduction to the first biography of Gandhi ever written. So he knew something about the man. Just imagine a British missionary working in South Africa writing Gandhi's first biography, and a former acting-viceroy writing its Introduction. [13] Add to this the invitation to Gandhi from Lord and Lady Ampthill for lunch—at their home, no less. As it turned out, the lunch had to be canceled because of the sudden illness of their son.[14] The point is that trust, mutual respect, and even civic friendship existed between the two. Gandhi felt free to air all contentious issues, including the demerits of Pax Britannica.

And what were the demerits of Pax Britannica? Its fundamental defect was that it exalted artha and kama over dharma and the pursuit of moksha. Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, a former law member of the viceroy's council (1869–1872), answered the question bluntly in a famous article in *The Nineteenth Century*: Pax Britannica represented a "belligerent civilization" and "peace compelled by force."[15] It relied on military conquest, arms having precedence over law.

13. Joseph J. Doke, *M. K. Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa* (London: London Indian Chronicle, 1909).

14. For Ampthill's invitation for Gandhi's lunch, see SN 5152, and SN 5165, Sabarmati Ashram Library, Ahmedabad.

15. J. F. Stephen, "Foundations of the Government of India," *The Nineteenth Century* October, 1883, p. 557.

Pax Gandhiana is Gandhi's response to Pax Britannica. *Hind Swaraj* is a critique of the latter and a manifesto of the former. Gandhi judges British imperialism to be a product of national pride, modern civilization, economic interests, military and technological superiority, and the neglect, by most of the British ruling elite, of any strict adherence to Christian ethics.

Pax Gandhiana is a phrase not found in Gandhi's writings. But it is certainly something to which his political philosophy, *when implemented*, leads. Hence the appropriateness of using this phrase in connection with his political philosophy. The clause "if implemented" is the operative clause here. Gandhi's political philosophy is not only a means of understanding the fundamental truths about political phenomena, but also a means of realizing, or at least attempting to realize, those truths in action. The realization of political truths should occur not only in the lives of individual citizens but also in the operations of the political and economic institutions. Understanding and action go together and are inseparable. You have to live the truth you profess. If realized in action, the outcome will give rise to appropriate political and economic institutions, which in turn will create a corresponding *social and political order*, an order of freedom and peace, which I call Pax Gandhiana. Those who truly understand Gandhi's political philosophy feel an obligation to put it into practice. Putting it into practice is the test of true understanding. This is why Pax Gandhiana is not utopia, but something realizable in action.

Understanding Gandhi's conceptual framework is the first step toward understanding the originality of his political philosophy. This is the main point of chapter 2. That framework is built on his new interpretation of the four canonical aims of human life: ethics (dharma), politics (artha), pleasure, including aesthetic pleasure (kama), and the pursuit of spiritual transcendence (moksha). Tradition misconstrued their relationship as being oppositional. Gandhi argues that they can, and do, interact positively. To the extent that they do so, the coercive state (being part of artha) has legitimacy. Thanks to his conceptual framework, Gandhi develops his own concept of coercive politics, which is of course different from the modern Western concept of the same.

In chapter 3 I explore Gandhi's contributions toward the evolution of the modern Indian political canon. From the nineteenth century onward the Western political canon—either in the form of liberalism or Marxism—dominated political thought in India. In the early twentieth century Gandhi, along with a few others, intervened and challenged the Western dominance. He produced an authentic Indian mode of thinking about Indian politics. In doing so, he deleted what was obsolete in tradition, preserved what was viable and valuable in it, and added to it what was new and necessary—thereby producing a new Indian political canon.

The two meanings of swaraj are taken up in chapter 4. Political swaraj means sovereign state, and spiritual swaraj means self-rule or self-discipline. As far as Gandhi is concerned, the one without the other is useless. Moreover, political swaraj is easier to achieve than spiritual swaraj. Political swaraj was achieved in 1947, but spiritual swaraj is a work in progress, not fully achieved at any given moment in time, but something that has to be striven for constantly. I then compare and contrast Gandhi's notion of self-rule with the liberal notion of negative freedom.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the political and the economic foundations of Pax Gandhiana respectively. Pax Gandhiana can flourish only with the support of a coercive state based on the consent of the governed. Similarly, it requires civic nonviolence or nonviolence as policy. Absolute nonviolence or nonviolence as creed is entirely a private virtue. Pax Gandhiana cannot be built on it—a point that C. Rajagopalachari, a very close friend of Gandhi made, correcting the error of the Newton of nonviolence.[16] Thus Pax Gandhiana avoids both anarchy and radical pacifism. The peace it seeks to achieve is the peace that the material and moral capabilities of the people can achieve. There is nothing utopian here.

Sarvodaya, inspired by Ruskin and perfected by ideas taken from the Upanishads and the *Gita*, provides the basic outlines of the economic basis of Pax Gandhiana. The famous Karachi resolution of 1931 on economic changes and fundamental rights elaborated its specifics. Perhaps

16. *CW*, 76, p. 462. Rajagopalachari used to refer to Gandhi as the Newton of modern nonviolence, claiming that he (Gandhi) discovered its basic laws.

the most important structural change that Gandhi proposes is found in *Constructive Programme* (1945). To the surprise of many, it gives priority to constructive work over satyagraha and civil disobedience. Satyagraha by 1945 had achieved its great historic mission; Gandhi felt that it was time to move on, and to focus on constructive work carried out by a multitude of nonviolent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), working in tandem with the state.

Chapter 7 addresses the important question of civilization and its relationship to Pax Gandhiana. Gandhi's argument is that civilizations should not align themselves with political and military power. His concept of civilization is apolitical and nonideological. I contrast it with the highly ideological concepts of civilization propounded by both Jinnah and Savarkar. Jinnah's concept of civilization proved to be divisive of the Indian nation and produced three states—India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Savarkar's concept also is divisive in that it pits *Hindutvavadi* Indians against all other Indians.

Chapter 8 takes up the question of Gandhi's position on the relationship of the arts to politics. There is a theoretical reason for his interest in the arts, given his stand on the four ends of human life. Kama, broadly understood, provides for aesthetic pleasure also. It therefore has to work in tandem with the pursuit of artha—wealth and power. Here Gandhi's indebtedness to Tolstoy and Ruskin is acknowledged. His dialogue with Romain Rolland and his debates with Tagore reveal the depth of his knowledge of art theory. It is not surprising that Gandhi did much to popularize certain forms of art: folk arts in the villages and religious music in Gujarat. His perception is that art ennobled life in the political community.

In chapter 9, I compare Gandhi's satyagraha and Thoreau's civil disobedience. Although Gandhi discovered satyagraha before he read Thoreau, he readily acknowledged that he derived great encouragement from the writings and practices of the sage of New England. He read Thoreau not only on civil disobedience but also on economics, as in the essay "Life without Principle," a critique of nineteenth-century American capitalism—recommended for further study in Appendix I of *Hind*

*Swarj*. The Gandhi–Thoreau engagement shows how American thought influenced India and Indian thought influenced America. The two are pioneers in what we call today the comparative study of political thought.

It is worth pointing out that Gandhi sees a positive role for Pax Gandhiana in providing a deep and strong foundation for future Indo-British relationship. The relationship between the two nations will be peaceful and lasting, he writes, if it is grounded in the ethics common to the religions practiced in India and Great Britain. If this happens, "we shall learn several things from you, and you will learn many things from us. So doing, we shall benefit each other and the world. But that will happen only when the root of our relationship is sunk in a religious soil [*dharma-kshetre*]."[17]

17. *HS*, p. 113. Note Gandhi's evocative use of the term *dharma-kshetre*: the *Gita*'s opening line uses the same term.

2

# Gandhi's Conceptual Framework

The key that unlocks Gandhi's political philosophy is its conceptual framework. It is fashioned out of his new interpretation of the old theory of the ends of human life—the *purusharthas*.

There are those who assert that Gandhi is not at all a political philosopher, but only a political strategist. What we should look for in him, they say, are his strategies of political action, such as nonviolence and satyagraha, rather than any philosophy that may or may not underpin the strategies.[1]

Then there is Sir V. S. Naipaul who, according to the late Victor Ramraj, is "the most prominent diasporan Indian to comment extensively" on Gandhi, who figures prominently in *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), *India a Million Mutinies*

1. Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1979); and Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2008).

*Now* (1990), and *A Writer's People: Ways of Looking and Feeling* (2008). According to Ramraj, Naipaul drew a line between the "pre-mahatma" and the "post-mahatma." The former was creative and admirable, while the latter became an object of public veneration and nothing more.[2] In an extensive interview given in 2007 to *India Today International*, Naipaul seemed to expand on his notion of a "post-mahatma" Gandhi. "Gandhism" (Naipaul's term) has no real unity. It is like a cafeteria menu comprising many disparate items—the dhoti, the spinning wheel, the khadi, vegetarianism, celibacy, social work, bits of Henry David Thoreau and John Ruskin, and the like. Those looking at the menu may choose whatever they like: And most seem to like khadi.[3] There is nothing in his life and writings, taken together, that compels intellectual assent. Everything in Gandhi is left to the preference of the individual reader. The most we can do is to engage with him ritually, that is, through his symbols such as the charkha, the loincloth, khadi, and so forth. His political ideas—such as they are—lack a real unity. "In fact, there was no completeness to him. He was full of bits and pieces he had picked up here and there . . . there was no real unity; the pieces did not fit together: no piece was indispensable."[4]

Naipaul, I think, is a good example of writers who think they can understand Gandhi without first understanding his conceptual framework. I argue that there is indeed unity to Gandhi's political philosophy, that the pieces fit together, and that there is an indispensable piece, namely his reformed version of the theory of the ends of human life. As is generally known, the theory of the *purusharthas* is the foundational theory of Indian civilization. Scholars who study that civilization use it as their organizing framework.[5] Its fundamental claim is that a truly fulfilled life

2. Victor J. Ramraj, *"The Man Who Suffers and the Mind Which Creates": V. S. Naipaul on Mahatma Gandhi*, the Gandhi Society of Calgary Annual Lecture, Calgary, 2009, 1–2.

3. Interview with *India Today International*, 10 September 2007, p. 39.

4. Ibid., p. 38.

5. See, for example, Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Meridian Books, 1956); and *The Sources of Indian Civilization*, ed. William Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

requires the pursuit of a variety of goals—ethical integrity, wealth, power, pleasure, and the quest for transcendence or spiritual liberation.

Comparable theories can be found in other civilizations too. Aristotle, for example, holds that a happy life requires the coordinated pursuit of political life lived in a polis, a sufficiency of wealth, friends, the practice of certain moral virtues (eleven in all, as in Gandhi), and an intellectual life that culminates in the contemplation of the divine. As Sir Anthony Kenny, an Oxford philosopher, remarks, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*—"moral philosophy's all-time best-seller"—argues that the contemplation of the divine is "the happiest life and goal of human existence." And his *Eudemian Ethics* adds "that the criterion for best action is whatever choice or possession of natural goods—bodily goods, wealth, friends and the like—will most conduce to the contemplation of God."[6]

## K. J. SHAH AND SUNDARA RAJAN

The current impetus to study Gandhi's political philosophy within the framework of the theory of the ends of life has come from the distinguished Indian philosopher, K. J. Shah (1922–1994). A student of Ludwig Wittgenstein, from 1945 to 1948, Shah studied philosophy at Trinity College, Cambridge. He returned to India to teach philosophy. His abiding interest in the issues of tradition, modernity, and swaraj led him to Gandhi. He came to believe that a modernized version of the classical Indian philosophical vision should form a common point of reference for intellectual life in India. Above all, he devoted his energies to developing a proper Indian framework for the study of Gandhi's political philosophy. And that framework is a modernized version of the theory of the *purusharthas*.[7]

6. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 18 January 2008, p. 26.

7. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures on Philosophical Psychology, 1946–47*, ed. P. T. Geach with notes by P. T. Geach, K. J. Shah, and A. C. Jackson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Two of Shah's articles are of critical importance here. The first, entitled "Of Artha and the *Arthasastra*," delves into, among other things, the meaning of the concept of *purushartha*. *Purushartha* refers to our essential humanness; it defines us as human beings. The four great ends are the different ways of human self-making; they "are the a priori conditions of being a human being."[8] To have an integrated human being, all the four ends have to work in unison.[9] Artha will not be a human pursuit—a *purushartha*—unless it is in accord with kama, dharma, and moksha; kama will not be a human pursuit unless it is in accord with artha, dharma, and moksha; dharma will not be a human pursuit unless it is in accord with arthha, kama, and moksha; and moksha will not be a human pursuit without the accord of dharma, kama, and moksha. "The four goals, therefore, constitute one single goal, though in the lives of individuals [and civilizations] the elements may get varying emphasis for various reason." In other words, "artha alone is greed; kama alone is lust; dharma alone is mechanical ritual; and moksha alone is escapism."[10]

In a second article, "*Purushartha* and Gandhi," Shah states, "The foundation of Gandhi's thought is the theory of the *purushartha*."[11] The implication is that for Gandhi politics is more than just a pursuit of power and self-interest. Being part of artha, politics is also a *purushartha*, something by means of which humans attain their full humanity.

Shah takes up the question of the relationship of the theory of the *purusharthas* to Hinduism. The question, he says, is an open one: "it could

8. K. J. Shah, "Of Artha and *Arthasastra*," in *Comparative Political Philosophy*, ed. Anthony J. Parel and Ronald C. Keith (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), pp. 141–62, at p. 156.

9. Lord Bhikhu Parekh takes a different view: Gandhi "so redefined the four *purusharthas* that they collapsed into one. He found little room for kama, equated moksha with dharma, assigned a limited place to artha and only if regulated by dharma, and thus made dharma the sole basis of life." Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 210.

10. Ibid., p. 146.

11. K. J. Shah, "*Purushartha* and Gandhi," in *Gandhi and the Present Global Crisis*, ed. Ramashray Roy (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1996), pp. 155–61, at p. 155.

be a religious theory but it need not be. It can be a theory of life and death, and a theory of a universe independent of any particular religious background. An individual may relate it sometimes to a particular metaphysic. But the theory of *purushartha* is independent of any specific religious foundations."[12] If, on the other hand, someone wishes to give it a religious grounding, Shah continues, such grounding need not be limited to Hinduism. Christianity and Islam can as easily provide the needed grounding.[13] That being the case, Hinduism has no monopoly on the concept, and Gandhi's thought on this matter is not dominated by a Hindu theory. Shah insists that he is not "foisting" the theory on Gandhi. "A careful consideration of Gandhi's own words and his own way of presenting things," he adds, would prove this to be the case.[14] In other words, a nonsectarian reading of Gandhi's theory of the ends of life is quite legitimate.

Shah takes up the issue of Gandhi taking a narrow stand on kama. This, he says, is not consistent with the theory of the *purusharthas*,[15] according to which it is wrong to suggest that "sexual relations can only be for progeny." The theory of *purusharthas* gives a much broader scope for kama: Desire can be satisfied so long as it is consistent with dharma, artha, and the pursuit of moksha. "But Gandhi here did not follow the principle," and he was mistaken in doing so.[16]

While Shah delves deeply into Indian philosophical thought, another distinguished Indian philosopher, R. Sundara Rajan, under Shah's influence, makes a lateral move and seeks to reach out to

12. Ibid., p. 156.

13. Ibid., p. 157.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 157.

16. Ibid., p. 160. See also Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth* (New York: Norton, 1969); Vinay Lal, "Nakedness, Nonviolence and Brahmacharya: Gandhi's Experiments in Celibate Sexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 9, 2000, p. 105; and A. J. Parel, "Celibacy and Sexuality," in *Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 137–56.

modern European philosophy. Rajan argues that the theory of the *purusharthas* is analyzable by the use of modern European philosophical categories—Habermas's emancipatory interest, Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger's fundamental ontology, and Ricoeur's existential hermeneutics. In doing so, he demonstrates the theory's vitality and nonsectarian universality.

We need only to highlight some of the basic insights that Rajan provides. The *purusharthas*, he says, should be seen as the "transcendental a priori constitutive grounds of a form of life that can be regarded as human. They are not merely empirical motivations of men but, rather they constitute our distinctive humanity."[17] "They are the grounds of the possibility of our humanity and it is they, in their simultaneity, which distinguish us as men, as human." In every one of our actions and experiences, "they are all constitutively involved."[18] That is to say, "They are the framework principles which constitute or define the specifically human mode of being in the world."[19] Kama, artha, dharma, and moksha "ground the aesthetic, the technical, the moral communicational and the emancipatory interests of reason."[20]

> Reason is not a mere faculty or instrumental capacity of men; being their essence, there is nothing in human beings which is untouched by it. There is no brute impulse or animal drive or instinct in man. For reason being the form or essence of a living human individual, it is present even in the life of impulse and desire. . . . The *purusharthas* are not apart from reason; they exemplify the fourfold way in which reason constitutes our humanity. The doctrine of the *purusharthas* may be looked upon as the phenomenology of constitutive reason.[21]

17. R. Sundara Rajan, "The *Purusharthas* in the Light of Critical Theory," *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* 7, 1979–80, pp. 342–43.

18. Ibid., p. 343.

19. Ibid., p. 344.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 345.

In a second article Rajan argues that the unity of the *purusharthas* is the unity of transcendental synthesis. While each *purushartha* has its own "specific" autonomy, each is oriented towards the other" and it is this orientation that makes each of them a distinctively human orientation.[22] He spells out four aspects of this synthetic unity, each one expressing the totality from its own point of view. Thus, from the point of view of kama, happiness is the scheme by which value appears in human experience; from the point of view of artha, the achievement of value has a consequence for the human mode of adaptation to the world, in the sense that the embodiment of value has to be founded on a material change of the situation; from the point of view of dharma, the achievement of value takes place in a moral context of interpersonal recognition of legitimacy; and from the point of view of moksha, value is recognized in terms of its growth promoting functions, that is, "a value is recognized as that which enhances the integrity and freedom of the self."[23] The connection between *purusharthas* inter se is "not merely logical, analytical, or empirical: they have a kind of necessity which synthetic a priori connections have in the Kantian scheme."[24]

Briefly, the pursuits of desire, interest, duty, and spirituality have their unity in human nature itself, understood as a composite of body, mind, and soul. Rajan, following Shah, succeeds in showing that the modernized theory of the ends of life is nonsectarian, and that it is intelligible even when considered from the perspective of non-Indian philosophical systems.

## GANDHI'S "OWN WORDS" AND "WAY OF PRESENTING THINGS"

Turning to Gandhi's "own words" and "way of presenting things," he sought to bring clarity to the concept of *purushartha*. Thus in the

22. R. Sundara Rajan, "Approaches to the Theory of the *Purusharthas*: Husserl, Heidegger and Ricoeur," *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 6, 1988–89, p. 135.

23. Ibid., p. 137.

24. Ibid., p. 138.

*Discourses on the Gita* we see him suggesting that *purushartha* is what distinguishes humans from other animals. It gives us our *differentia specifica*. "Our only right is to *purushartha*. We can only strive and work. All human beings, and animals too, struggle. The only difference is that we believe that behind our struggle there is an intelligent purpose." That purpose seeks much more than bodily material well-being; it seeks moral and spiritual well-being as well. We seek to transcend our mere bodily condition; we strive even to surpass ourselves. We can achieve all this if we pursue our *purushartha*. "Only effort aimed at the welfare of the atman can be described as *purushartha*. . . . All else is futile expenditure of energy."[25]

Gandhi also sought to free the concept from its perceived misogyny. In popular parlance, *purushartha* was often associated with "manliness." If this were true, women would be thought not to have *purushartha*. Gandhi undertook to do something about this. He wrote to Prema Kantak, a female disciple, for help. "The word '*purushartha*' is one-sided in its connotation. Can you think of a neutral word?"[26] He seemed to have found an answer a few weeks later: "To understand an ideal and then to make a Herculean effort to reach it, no matter how difficult it is, this is *purushartha*. . . . The word *purusha* should be interpreted in its etymological sense, and, not merely to mean a man. That which dwells in the *pura*, the body, is *purusha*. If we interpret the word '*purushartha*' in this sense, it can be used equally for men and women."[27]

More importantly, he saw in *purushartha* the human capacity to confront even fate (*daivam, Gita* 18: 13–14). He addressed this matter in the *Discourses on the Gita*. "In one sphere Fate is all powerful, and in another *purushartha*. *Purushartha* means striving, and supreme *purushartha* means escaping from the pairs of opposites."[28] In his translation of

25. *CW*, 32, pp. 350–51.

26. Gandhi's letter to Kantak, 28 July 1930, *CW*, 44, p. 52.

27. M. K. Gandhi's letter to Narandas Gandhi, 12 August 1930, *CW*, 44, p. 80.

28. *CW*, 32, p. 360.

the *Gita* he remarks that one should exert *purushartha* to achieve "self-realization." [29] Again, "*purushartha* is within man's control."[30]

The relationship of fate and *purushartha* preoccupied Gandhi's thought for many years. In March 1945 he wrote about it to one of his friends. "Fate [*bhagya*] is the fruition of karma. Fate may be good or it may be bad. Human effort [*purushartha*] consists in overcoming adverse fate or reducing its impact. There is a continuous struggle between fate and human effort [*purushartha*]. Who can say which of the two really wins? Let us therefore continue effort [*purushartha*] and leave the result to God."[31] In the same year (1945): Under "Thoughts for the Day," we find the following for March 16: "Between destiny [*bhagya*] and human effort [*purushartha*] there is an incessant struggle. Let us continue to endeavor [*purushartha*] and leave the result to God." And for March 17: "Let us not leave everything to destiny [*bhagya*] nor be vain about our endeavour [*purushartha*]. Destiny will take its own course. We should only see where we can intervene or where it is our duty to do so, whatever the result."[32]

So much for Gandhi's understanding of the concept of *purushartha*. He was even more interested in understanding how the four *purusharthas* interacted with one another: The conceptual framework of his entire political philosophy is based on his understanding of their interaction inter se. To see how he understood this interaction we have to turn to his "words" and "way of presenting things." Our strategy here is to look at some of his key writings. *Hind Swaraj* is of course important here, for it puts political swaraj (which belongs to the sphere of artha) into contact with spiritual swaraj (which belongs to the spheres of dharma and the pursuit of moksha). Since we consider this in detail in chapter 4, we move on to examine three of his other writings—the Foreword to *Gokhale's*

29. *CW*, 41, p. 94.

30. Ibid., p. 101.

31. *CW*, 79, p. 258.

32. Ibid., p. 433.

*Speeches* (1918), the *Autobiography* (1925–29), and the Introduction to his translation of the *Gita* (1930).

## FOREWORD TO GOKHALE'S SPEECHES

The "Foreword to *Gokhale's Speeches*" is one of Gandhi's very important shorter writings on his political philosophy.[33] It analyzes Gokhale's political philosophy and presents it as the most suitable for modern India. The analysis is set within the framework of the philosophical concepts of *pravriti* and *nivriti*. Roughly, *pravriti* (used seven times in the Foreword) means action that leads to *nivriti* (liberation). Every age has its predominant form of *pravriti* that leads to *nivriti*. In the present age, politics is the appropriate form of *pravriti*. But politics (which belongs to the sphere of artha) can be *pravriti* only if politics is spiritualized—a much-debated concept in Gandhi. "Spiritualizing" here means bringing the principles of politics into contact with the relevant principles of *sadharan* (universal) dharma. It does not mean that artha is being replaced by dharma. It means that in given circumstances the principles of both artha and dharma work out an honorable compromise. Spiritualizing also means using the right means to attain the political end in question. Gandhi is very clear on the ends-means issue in the Foreword. We cannot rise, he writes, unless our political condition changes. It is not true "that we shall necessarily progress if our political condition undergoes a change, irrespective of the manner in which it is brought about." The means must be "clean" (*swaccha sadhan*) if changes are to lead to a better India. "Gokhale not only perceived this right at the beginning of his public life but also followed the principle in action." Thus spiritualizing politics means nothing mysterious: It means, first, bringing the three *purusharthas* into play, and second, using clean means to attain the end. If politics as *pravriti* can do this,

33. *CW*, 14, pp. 198–202.

it can ultimately pave the way even to moksha. Gokhale understood this, and "placed this ideal before the whole nation." "He declared that, unless our political movement was informed by the spirit of dharma it would be barren."[34]

"In this age," comments Gandhi, "only political *sannyasis* can fill and adorn the ideal of *sannyasa*, others will more likely than not disgrace the *sannyasi's* saffron garb." Gokhale, his "political guru"[35] (*rajya guru*) was a new political *sannyasi*. Lest anyone gets the idea that Gokhale had suddenly entered a monastery, let us take a glance at his resume. A college professor, editor of a highly reputed quarterly journal, member of the legislative council of Bombay and Viceroy's Legislative Council in Delhi, president of the Indian National Congress, and the founder of the Servants of India Society—the resume is that of the premier Indian statesman of the day. In calling him a new political *sannyasi*, it is clear that Gandhi is not trying to resurrect the idea of traditional *sannysa*: He is using the epithet for rhetorical, not philosophical reasons.[36]

The conclusion to the Foreword is predictable enough. Gokhale's achievement has exemplary value: "No Indian who aspires to follow the way of true dharma (*dharma marg*) can afford to remain aloof from politics." Every Indian would have to undertake "public service as his mission." And when this happens, "the political system which has become odious would reform itself." Gokhale labored to bring about this state of affairs.[37] In other words, he brought artha, dharma, and the pursuit of moksha together in a very modern way. That was his great legacy.

34. Ibid., pp. 201–202. I have relied on the Gujarati text here, as the English translation does not capture Gandhi's philosophical nuances.

35. Ibid., p. 199.

36. See B. R. Nanda, *Gokhale* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

37. *CW*, 14, p. 202.

## THE *AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

The *Autobiography*, completed in 1929, is an account of Gandhi's politics up to about 1920. The Introduction and Conclusion (called "Farewell" in the text) present, in a succinct way, the philosophy that animates his life and politics. In other words, The *Autobiography* is a detailed account of how he pursued moksha through the paths of artha and dharma.

The Introduction states the ultimate goal of his life: "What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve" is "self-realization" (*atma-darshan*), "to see God face to face" (*Ishwarno-sakshatkar*), "to attain moksha." And the path to this end lies through the field of politics: "all my ventures in the field of politics [*rajya-prakaran*] are directed to this same end." The same is true of dharma and his experiments with truth—"they are spiritual, or rather moral, for the essence of dharma is morality [*niti*]."[38]

The Conclusion makes more or less the same point: To attain the ultimate end of life one has to engage in political activities in accordance with the principles not only of politics but also of ethics (dharma). Anyone who aspires "to see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face," cannot afford to be otherworldly and neglectful of artha. "That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that dharma has nothing to with politics do not know what dharma means."[39]

That is not all. To make politics the path of moksha one has to take into account one's moral strengths and weaknesses and spiritual deficiencies. For example, Gandhi experimented with the virtue of celibacy throughout his life. He had some successes, but he had also some failures—not in terms of sexual lapses, but in terms of prudence and judgment. He

38. *CW*, 39, p. 3.

39. Ibid., pp. 401–402. The text often translates dharma as "religion": this can be confusing, because what Gandhi really means is ethics, not organized religion.

admitted his weaknesses with unusual candor and humility. Following the canonical ends of life was no easy task. It was a daily challenge.

Things were no easier in Indian society, his major field of political activity (*pravirti*). Religious riots had become almost a part of Indian life. The oppression of women, the Dalits, the Tribals, and religious minorities was widespread and painful. Purification of Indian society and individual purification were both necessary for pursuing the canonical ends of life. Of this too, Gandhi was very conscious.

That is why his reflections in the Conclusion on the need for purification are highly relevant to our discussion. "But the path to self-purification is hard and steep," he writes. One must be pure "in thought, speech and action, and rise against the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion." He does not have in him "as yet," the required "triple purity." In spite of ceaseless striving, it is still a work in progress. There are "subtle passions" and "dormant passions" lying hidden in the soul. Pride, egoism, and the thirst for fame are difficult to overcome. "So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him."[40] Thus, making politics, ethics, and spirituality work together means that Gandhian politics must take seriously the violence and evils that lurk in the self and in society.

What does political action, *pravriti*—spiritualizing politics—really entail? First, it entails a realistic appraisal of the human condition, at the level of both society and the individual. It must accept human society as it is and political events as they occur. Only then can a realistic work of reform (*parivarthan*) begin. The *Autobiography* is replete with references to the general societal conditions that nurture untruth, violence, egotism, injustice, greed, lust, and indifference toward fellow human beings.

Gandhi's realism led him to collaborate with the empire, within the limits of honor, justice, and necessity. Otherwise, he and his family, like thousands of Indian immigrants to South Africa, could not have survived. Postcolonial commentators criticise him for his realism, and give

40. Ibid., p. 402.

their allegiance to violent revolutionaries such as Fanon. Instead of violent revolution, Gandhi introduced the nonviolent revolution of satyagraha. But even the success of satyagraha depended on collaboration with honorable opponents such as Jan Smuts of South Africa,[41] with the viceroys of India, and with autocratic rulers of Indian states, such as the ruler of Travancore.

He was known to have worked with local capitalists, some of whom were his great financial supporters. Here too he invited heavy criticism from postcolonial thinkers. I do not think his work with Indian capitalists reflects a commitment to capitalism—which he did not have. It was rather due to the alternative that the socialists and the Marxists had to offer—class war. Gandhi, while a friend of India's capitalists, was a greater friend of India's poor.

As for achieving changes at the individual level, Gandhian political philosophy offers a regime of various spiritual exercises, the eleven civic virtues (mentioned already), and the constant striving for self-purification. Although *Hind Swaraj* has a dialogue on violence as a means of bringing about political liberation, in the end revolutionary violence was rejected in favor of persuasion and nonviolent resistance in the form of satyagraha.

Gandhi's acceptance of the realities of the human condition at the empirical level spared him from the danger of appearing either as a high-minded moralist or a violent revolutionary in the mould of Mao or Fanon. To discover how he pursued the various ends of life nonviolently—with a certain degree of success—we have to read his *Autobiography*.

## THE *BHAGAVAD-GITA*

Gandhi had a deep and detailed knowledge of the *Gita*. During his 1922–1924 jail term, he prepared a concordance of it, published in 1936. This

41. On this, see Charles DiSalvo's important work, *M. K. Gandhi, Attorney at Law: The Man before the Mahatma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

was followed by the massive *Discourses on the Gita* given in 1926 to the members of Sabarmati Ashram. He did not speak from a prepared text. The text we have now is based on notes taken by Mahadev Desai, his secretary, and Punjabhai, another member of the Ashram. The notes were edited and published posthumously by Narahari Parikh in 1955. Neither Gandhi nor Desai nor Punjabhai, so far as we know, had gone over the present text. The central teaching of the *Gita*, it concludes, is "renunciation of fruit of action." It is a nonsectarian ethic, meant not only for the members of the Ashram but also for peoples belonging to all faiths.[42]

On March 12, 1930 (the day the famous Salt March started) Gandhi published his translation of the *Gita* from Sanskrit into Gujarati, under the title *Anasakti Yoga* ("the yoga of nonattachment"). He wrote an important Introduction to it in Gujarati, which he later translated into English. This Introduction is critical to the present argument.

*Anasakti Yoga* seeks to bring the teachings of the *Gita* to an audience much wider than that of the *Discourses on the Gita* (the elite audience of the Ashram). Gandhi now wants to reach the whole of Gujarat, especially women, petty shopkeepers, peasants, Dalits, and the like, "who have little or no literary equipment, who have neither the time nor the desire to read the *Gita* in the original, and yet who stand in need of its support."[43] He wants them to practice the ethic of the renunciation of the fruit of action in a manner suitable to them. *Anasakti Yoga*, as it were, levels the distinction between the Ashram elite and the humblest strata of Gujarati society.

Gandhi had read all the great commentators of the past on the *Gita*—Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Vallabha, and others.[44] But he was not satisfied with any of them on one particular point—the relationship of artha to the pursuit of moksha.

Neither was he satisfied with B. G. Tilak's interpretation of the same in his magnum opus, *Gitarahasya*. According to Gandhi, Tilak believed that

42. *CW*, 32, p. 350.

43. *CW*, 41, p. 92.

44. *CW*, 34, p. 93.

everything was fair in politics. "We have joined issue with him in that conception of political life. We consider that political life of the country will become thoroughly corrupt if we import Western tactics and methods," Gandhi wrote. Politics for Gandhi was about interests—true interests. Interests were true only when pursued with "strictest adherence to honesty, fair play and charity."[45]

Tilak strongly objected to Gandhi's criticism, which only made matters worse. Tilak replied that "Politics [was] a game of worldly people and not of sadhus." Tilak's politics preferred the maxim of Lord Krishna in *Gita* 4: 11, namely, return "wickedness unto the wicked," to the maxim of the Buddha—"conquer anger by non-anger."[46]

Gandhi replied that there was no opposition between these two maxims. The Buddha's maxim laid down an "eternal principle," and Krishna's maxim laid down "the principle of conquering hate by love, untruth by truth." These maxims were meant not only for the moral elite but also for ordinary people who had little book learning. To prefer Krishna's maxim over the Buddha's, as Tilak did, was to betray a "mental laziness." "The epitome of all religions is to promote *purushartha*, and *purushartha* is nothing but a desperate attempt to become sadhu, i.e., to become a gentleman in every sense of the term."[47]

Perhaps Gandhi had Tilak in mind when he wrote the Introduction to his translation of the *Gita*. Whatever his intentions, he made three main points. First, the *Gita* wants everyone—the learned as well as ordinary people—to pursue moksha as a valid end of life. Second, the means to this pursuit is the renunciation of the fruit of action. Gandhi grants that "according to the letter of the *Gita* it is possible to say that warfare is consistent with renunciation of fruit." At the same time, in today's circumstances, such renunciation is impossible without nonviolence.[48] Third, the

45. *CW*, 16, p. 484.

46. Ibid., pp. 490–91.

47. Ibid. Gandhi is stretching the meaning of "sadhu" here for rhetorical effect.

48. *CW*, 41, p. 100.

*Gita* rejects the "common belief" that artha, dharma, and moksha are at cross-purposes:

> The common belief is that dharma is always opposed to artha. 'One cannot act according to dharma in mercantile and such other matters. There is no place for dharma in such pursuits; dharma is only for the attainment of moksha. *Let dharma work in the sphere of dharma, and artha in the sphere of artha*', we hear many worldly-wise people say. In my opinion the author of the Gita has dispelled this delusion. He has drawn no line of demarcation between moksha and worldly pursuits.[49]

This key passage provides the clue to doing politics in the Gandhian mode. It brings into play simultaneously all three goals of life—artha, dharma, and the pursuit of moksha. Politics as the pursuit of true interests is consistent with the ethic of the renunciation of the fruit of action: All it requires is that the right means be used in pursuing the right interests—in the spirit of fair play, honesty, nonviolence, and the other ten civic virtues.

Gandhi's translation of the *Gita* had an important purpose—to show that there was no one way of practicing the ethic of renunciation. True, everyone of good will had to practice this ethic in their practice of politics. No one was exempted—neither the spiritual elite nor women nor the Dalits of Gujarat.[50] Similarly, there was no one way of practicing

49. Ibid., p. 98. I have used the Gujarati original here: *Aanasakti Yoga* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1930), 23. The italicized sentence is missing in the English text. J. T. F. Jordens is mistaken in claiming that Gandhi's statement on the *Gita* of 11 October 1925 is definitive. The Introduction to *Anasakti Yoga*, I think, is his definitive statement on the *Gita*: it states definitively what the relationship of the three purusharthas inter se should be. See Jordens, "Gandhi and the *Bhagavadgita*" in *Modern Indian Interpreters of Bhagavadgita*, ed. Robert Minor (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 90.

50. Dipesh Chakrabarty and Rochona Majumdar, in a thought-provoking essay, argue that Gandhi's position on "spiritualizing" politics underwent a change after 1920. But the Introduction to *Anasakti Yoga* (1930) indicates continuity: the notion that the pursuit of artha should be in harmony with the pursuits of dharma and moksha remains the same before and after 1920. Everyone, the elite of Sabarmati Ashram and women and the masses, are invited to engage in politics. See their essay "Gandhi's Gita and Politics as Such," in

nonviolence. Some practiced it as creed, while others did so as policy. There is room for both in Gandhi's politics. Just as liberals allowed for conscientious objectors, so Gandhi allowed for nonviolence as creed.

Failure to live up to the standard set by *Gita*, as Gandhi sees it, is of course to be expected. That is why you have the daily examination of conscience: so that you resolve to do better the next day. Gandhian politics calls for honorable compromises. Satyagraha is nothing if it does not make honorable compromises. The ability to make honorable compromise distinguishes Gandhian politics from the politics of the Maoists, the Marxists, the adepts of Hindutva, not to mention the jihadists—all of whom pride themselves in being uncompromising.

## NEHRU EMBRACES GANDHI'S FRAMEWORK

Granted that Gandhi's conceptual framework is valid, critics wonder whether it is implementable. In Jawaharlal Nehru we have an answer. Nehru and Gandhi are the preeminent founders of modern India. They were also very close friends. In the early years of their friendship, however, they did not see eye to eye on the question of conceptual frameworks. That changed in Nehru's later years, when as prime minister he began to see the wisdom of Gandhi's framework and began to act accordingly.

Well into the 1940s Nehru worked from within an eclectic framework of "a vague humanism," mixed with a vague idealism akin to Vedanta. To this mix was added, "the fundamentals of the socialist theory" and much of the Marxist philosophical outlook: "its monism and non-duality of mind and matter, the dynamics of matter and the dialectic of continual change by evolution as well as leap, through action and reaction, cause and effect, thesis, antithesis, and synthesis."[51]

*Political Thought in Action: The Bhagavad Gita and Modern India*, eds. Shruti Kapila and Faisal Devji (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 66–87.

51. J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London: Meridian Books, 1946), p. 15.

By about 1960 all this began to change. In "a series of intimate talks" with R. K. Karanjia, Nehru explained what happened. He states that he began to see Gandhi as "much more than the nationalist." His nationalism had a definite social content—a "deep social conscience, not in the socialist or class-struggle sense, but as reflected in the almost continuous struggle he waged against inequality for the under-dog, the Harijans and peasantry." Gandhi, said Nehru, used "the lever of his challenge to Untouchability" to shake and overturn the caste structure. He insisted on maintaining "continuity with the past," and accepted the existing social system as a base for his political action. In this way, Gandhi introduced "new and revolutionary processes in the mass mind and brought about mighty social changes." [52] According to Nehru, he "conceived and brought about radical changes in social thinking and in social institutions "in terms of continuity and not in terms of a break with the past."[53]

Nehru considered himself "a faithful convert to the Gandhian outlook."[54] The "policies and philosophy which we seek to implement," he states, "are the policies and philosophy taught to us by Gandhiji. . . . His thoughts and approaches and solutions helped us to cover the chasm between the Industrial Revolution and the Nuclear Era."[55] "The emphasis on ethical and spiritual solutions is not unconscious," adds Nehru. "It is deliberate, quite deliberate. And there are good reasons for this." First, "apart from material development that is imperative, I believe that the human mind is hungry for something deeper in terms of moral and spiritual development, without which all material advance may not be worthwhile. "[56] What modern society needs is a "fully integrated human being." There is need for "the spiritual and ethical counterpart of the purely material machinery of planning and development being brought into the making of man." Nehru

52. R. K. Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr Nehru* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960), pp. 21–22.

53. Ibid., p. 75.

54. Ibid., p. 77.

55. Ibid., p. 23.

56. Ibid., p. 32.

insists that the welfare state is not enough. "Even in states with highly developed economies material progress by itself appears to have failed to provide people with a fully integrated life." A one-sided materialistic mode of development creates a "vacuum" and "maladjustment." "For as soon as man gets the material comfort he desires, something deeper inside him hungers for—well, something deeper, something spiritual and ethical." [57]

Nehru felt that the materialism of Marxism had created a spiritual vacuum. "Yes, a spiritual vacuum, an emptiness of the spirit, the results of which is what you call the angry young men and women of our generation. It is not an unintelligent or delinquent generation. They are intelligent and basically sound, but there is something going wrong." You cannot argue about these matters "in terms of Marxist economy or any other set pattern. There must be a new approach, a modern approach, a moral or ethical approach."[58]

What Nehru, interpreting Gandhi, hopes for is the evolution of an integrated personality, and a new, integrated culture. "What the world is groping for today seems to be a new dimension in human existence, a new balance. *Only a fully integrated man with spiritual depth and moral strength will be able to meet the challenge of the new times. Material advance without spiritual balance can be disastrous.*"[59] "This is one reason why I want to stress the importance of our peaceful tradition which Gandhiji resurrected into a practical and effective philosophy of action."[60] There is need "to shed the dogmas and theories we have inherited from the past, particularly those that recommended conflict and violence [an obvious reference to Marxism], and develop the spiritual character of humanity jointly with material prosperity so as to create a fully integrated human being."[61] What Nehru is suggesting is that the

57. Ibid., p. 34.

58. Ibid., pp. 35–36.

59. Ibid., p. 103. Italics Nehru's.

60. Ibid., p. 105.

61. Ibid., pp. 105–106. Ananya Vajpeyi rightly notes that "Nehru's search for the self" included the effort to bring dharma and artha into line with each other. A. Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 171.

yearning that drives humanity forward is the yearning for transcendence coupled with the natural desire for material well-being—not the drive for violence and class struggle. In other words, the pursuit of political interests takes place in the context of the pursuits of dharma and moksha.

## AMBEDKAR'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

B. R. Ambedkar is the great liberator of India's oppressed—the Dalits. Unlike Fanon, he sought to liberate them with the aid of law, the Constitution, and the state, not revolutionary violence and class struggle. His intellectual framework, like Nehru's, underwent a change in the final years of his career. He began with John Dewey and the ideals of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity—and the like. He was also actively engaged in the day to day work of liberating the Dalits through politics and social reform.

Here he came to the question of whether the Dalits were Hindus or not. Ambedkar argued that they were not; and if they were, they should convert to Buddhism. Gandhi argued that the Dalits were Hindus, and that they should be liberated neither through violence nor conversion but through a radical reform of Hinduism itself.

Ambedkar also sought to reform Buddhism in his own way by adopting Engaged Buddhism, which brought artha into contact with dhamma (dharma). Historical Buddhism, we remember, had separated artha from dharma. Siddhartha, after all, was a prince before he became the Enlightened One: a prince who renounced wealth and power in order to attain wisdom. Engaged Buddhism brought about a rapprochement between artha and dharma.

It was fitting that Ambedkar, a Dalit, should become the lawgiver of modern India. The oppressed of India were liberated through law, not violent revolution. For it is through law, not violent revolution, that the oppressed of India were to be liberated. The new Indian Constitution is a testimony to Ambedkar's greatness.

However, the final means that he proposed for liberation was religion, not law. This became clear to the general public when he converted to Engaged Buddhism in 1956. He recognized that overcoming the impact of so deep-seated a prejudice as caste prejudice would require something more than secular law. "The secular system," he writes, "cannot last very long unless it has got the sanction of the religion, however remote it may be."[62] Engaged Buddhism, he believed, had the power that secular law lacked. "The greatest thing that the Buddha has done is to tell the world that the world cannot be reformed except by the reformation of the mind of the man, and the mind of the world. . . . The Buddha has energized your conscience itself that is acting as a sentinel in order to keep you on your path. There is no trouble, when the mind is converted, the thing is permanent." Again, "I want to tell you . . . : religion, if it is to be a moral force for the regeneration of society, you must constantly din it into the ears of the people."[63]

Thus, Ambedkar adjusted his conceptual framework to make room for artha, dhamma, and religion. If Dalits are to be liberated from social, economic, and political oppression, and if they are to reach nirvana (as they must), they must realize that the process of liberation requires the confluence of artha, dhamma, and the pursuit of nirvana.

## "GANDHI'S INVISIBILITY" IN POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonialism is a critique of Western cultural, political, economic, and epistemic domination of the colonized world. It has many things in common with Gandhi's own critique of colonialism—"the four-fold disaster," as he called it. Yet Robert Young, a leading postcolonial theorist, makes the claim—with justification I think—that Gandhi remains "invisible" to the eyes of postcolonial theorists. "Despite being the most

62. B. R. Ambedkar, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches* (Mumbai: Government of Maharashtra, 2003), vol. 17, part 3, p. 515.

63. Ibid., pp. 555–56.

widely known anti-colonial leader of all time," and "despite a mass of theoretical and other writings," Gandhi's name is not "widely cited in postcolonial studies," the exception being Leela Gandhi, the Mahatma's great-granddaughter.[64] In Edward Said's *Orientalism*, for example, Gandhi does not even make it to the Index. Yet Said's theory has had an enormous influence on many postcolonial Indian thinkers—Homi Bhabha and Gauri Viswanathan among them. His invisibility is all the more "curious," adds Young, "given the dominance of Indian intellectuals in the postcolonial field."[65]

Young gives three reasons for Gandhi's invisibility. First, postcolonial theorists prefer Frantz Fanon over Gandhi as *the* theorist par excellence of postcolonialism. The second reason has to do with Gandhi's conceptual framework—its "unfashionable adherence to the spiritualization of politics," and his idea that "the spiritual diffuses all aspects of everyday life, including the political." The third reason concerns the conceptual frameworks of the postcolonial theorists themselves. They, for the most part, tend to adopt either a Marxist or a poststructuralist framework. As Young notes, "an absolute division between the material and the spiritual operates within postcolonial studies, emphasizing the degree to which the field is distinguished by an unmediated secularism." Despite its espousal of subaltern resistance, postcolonial theory "scarcely values subaltern resistance that does not operate according to its own secular terms." Gandhi seems unfashionable simply because of "postcolonialism's ideological uniformity in its materialist commitment."[66]

There is a paradox here: For all their anti-Western stance, the conceptual frameworks of postcolonial thought remain grounded in Western thought—whether in the form of Marxism or poststructuralism. As George Woodcock, a noted Canadian literary critic has remarked, there is an embarrassing intellectual ambivalence in postcolonialism's attitude

64. Robert C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 337.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., pp. 337–38.

toward the West. While it rejects Western domination in culture, politics, economics, and epistemology, it retains what are basically Western frameworks to carry out the critique. This dependence on Western frameworks finds postcolonial theorists rejecting the importance of religion. Hostility toward religion is common to most anticolonial revolutionaries and postcolonial theorists. Mao, Ho Chi-minh, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Frantz Fanon all fought against religion. Gandhi is the sole exception. He alone among the anticolonial revolutionaries who went to the West, "came back unconverted"—to modern Western materialism. He returned to his own traditions and reformed them. He built out of them a modern yet Indian conceptual framework. He chose from the West "no more than what was needed to vitalize his own beliefs." Moreover, what he took he fitted into his own framework—thereby avoiding the charge of syncretism. He returned to "the resources of his own tradition, out of which he drew strength that made him so responsive to the aspirations of the Indian poor and so imaginative a leader in the fight for liberation."[67] Thus, to understand why Gandhi is invisible to the postcolonial theorists, we must understand not only postcolonial intellectual frameworks, but also Gandhi's.

## IS GANDHI A CULTURAL HYBRID?

Hybridity has vogue in current postcolonial thinking. Robert Young makes the claim that Gandhi's use of the term *samas* in *Hind Swaraj* "foreshadows" Homi Bhabha's invention of the theory of hybridity.[68] This claim is based on Young's analysis of Gandhi's use of the term *samas* in *Hind Swaraj*.

*Samas* is a linguistic technique originating in Sanskrit grammar—now adopted by virtually all Indian languages. According to this technique, a

67. George Woodcock, *Gandhi* (London: Fontana Modern Masters, 1972), pp. 14–15.

68. Young, *Postcolonialism*, p. 349.

new word is formed by uniting two or more words existing in the same language: That it occurs in the same language is very important for Gandhi's argument. For example, the Gujarati word "Mohandas" (Gandhi's first name) is the result of a *samas* between Mohan and Das. *Samas* enriches the vocabulary of the given language, making it internally assimilative.

In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi uses the term *samas* for a specific cultural purpose, namely, to convey the point that Indian culture has a capacity for assimilating people who belong to different cultures. Such a cultural *samas* enriches India as a civic nation. Gandhi draws an analogy between what happens in Indian languages and what can happen in Indian culture. India can create a new Indian culture because of Indian culture's "faculty for assimilation" (*samas karvano guna*).[69] To understand what Gandhi means by this, we must take into account the political context. He is responding to the question, raised on the same page, of whether the introduction of Islam into India has "unmade the nation." The answer is "No," precisely because Indian culture has a capacity for *samas*. Thanks to this capacity, "they merge in it." Merging is the result of the *samas* process. Therefore, India can become a modern, civic nation, thanks to the assimilative capacity of its culture. The new culture of India that Gandhi is building is not based on sectarian doctrines, but on the *deep ethic* common to all religions practiced in India, combined with the politics of civic nationalism.

There is no hint of hybridity on Gandhi's part. He does not at all mean to say that Indians should become religious hybrids—even if such a thing is possible, which it is not. Rather, Gandhi advocates for each religion practiced in India to be itself, and not permit sectarian doctrines to interfere with the *samas* process. There is no question of Indians becoming Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Sikh-Buddhist-Jain-Parsee hybrids. Where necessary, sectarian doctrines will have to make "reasonable accommodation" with the new culture. Thus, in the *samas* process Hindus will remain Hindus, Muslims will remain Muslims, and so forth, but with

69. *HS*, p. 50.

appropriate "reasonable accommodation"—where expedient. Culturally, Indians will be Indians enjoying their Indian-ness, while practicing their particular religions.

If Gandhi wanted Indians to become religious hybrids he would have said so, and he would have used a word other than *samas*. But he does not do this, he does not ask Indians to be religious hybrids either. Instead, he asks for *cultural* assimilation—the merging of Indians through the *samas* process. Thus, the linguistic process of *samas* does not make Gujarati a hybrid language; nor does the *samas* process make "Mohandas" a hybrid person. The *cultural* process of *samas* affecting all Indians does not make them cultural hybrids. Rather, just as *samas* takes place in the same language, so also the cultural assimilation of Indians takes place within *the same all-India Indian culture.*

I think Young reads his own Western meaning of hybridity into Gandhi's meaning of *samas*. He does so by slightly changing the rules of interpretation. In place of the rules of Indian philology, he introduces the rules of Western philology. Indian philology requires that the *samas* process take place within the same language. However, Young writes that in using the term *samas*, "Gandhi is suggesting that in response to immigrants of differing religions, India has a cultural facility analogous to the formation of compound or portmanteau words."[70] Young then proceeds to introduce a hermeneutical technique not found in Gandhi to explain Gandhi's notion of *samas*. Gandhi, he now alleges, brings the Indian notion of *samas* closer to *the Western notion of hybridity*: "While *samas* refers to opposite words in the same language being joined together, Gandhi's example in fact brings it closer to the western philological structure of linguistic hybridity, in which a hybrid denotes 'a composite word formed of elements belonging to different languages' (OED)."[71]

I suggest that it is Young, not Gandhi who introduces the Western concept of hybridity to understand Gandhi's Indian meaning. Since Young

70. Young, *Postcolonialism*, p. 348.

71. Ibid. Here Young makes a reference to the *OED*.

cites the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) to make his point, let us see what else the OED has to say on hybridity. A hybrid according to the OED (1959) is "a half-breed, cross-breed, mongrel." According to OED (*Indian English Supplement*, 1996), a hybrid is "an animal or a plant that has different parents of different species or varieties: A mule is a hybrid of a male donkey and a female horse." In Indian English, hybridity has a pejorative connotation. Gandhi certainly would not have wanted the Indian readers of *Hind Swaraj* to understand that the new cultural process of *samas* he was describing and recommending would make them half-breeds or mongrels or mules. The Indian philological meaning of *samas* would not allow such a meaning. So it is the introduction of a Western meaning to understand an Indian meaning that calls for hybridity. Gandhi does not want the Indian readers of *Hind Swaraj* to become *religious hybrids*. Instead he invites them to merge into the new civic culture.

Young, however, is using a Western meaning to understand an Indian meaning. To this end, he links hybridity, Gandhi, Bhabha, and Bakhtin. Young writes, "Gandhi thus makes the link between a linguistic and cultural hybridity in the mixing up of populations of different cultures that foreshadows Bhabha's central thesis of a disjunctive cultural hybridity, inspired by Bakhtin's account of 'intentional' linguistic hybridity."[72] Young goes a step further to assert that Gandhi's campaign for social and political reforms in India should be seen as part of a process of hybridization. It is in the "hybridized world of Gandhi's political thinking," he writes, "that the material, historical and political contestatory force of the concept becomes evident." In practicing "hybridization," adds Young, Gandhi "challenged and articulated conflictual, yet dynamic aspects of Indian culture that Bhabha, in turn, was to transform into a way of reading modernity."[73]

Young does not stop there. Hybridization, he now alleges, applies even to Gandhi's writing and speaking styles. Citing unnamed commentators,

72. Ibid., p. 349.

73. Ibid.

Young accuses Gandhi's writings and speeches of being "hybridized in form, consisting of an idiosyncratic, eclectic hotchpotch of disjunctive topics, seemingly almost randomly put together on the spot."[74]

My aim here is not to examine the merits or demerits of Gandhi as a writer,[75] but to argue that the key to understand him is his own conceptual framework. Postcolonial writers foist their own conceptual frameworks on him and this leads to misreading him. If they wish to understand Gandhi, they must first understand his conceptual framework. The real Gandhi is neither a hybrid nor a hybridizer. On the contrary, he shows how Indians belonging to different *cultures* can *merge* into the same civic Indian nation. Gandhi's conceptual framework provides for a process of assimilation (*samas*), not hybridization.

Gandhi's conceptual framework enables the reader to solve some of the perceived incompatibilities in his thought. Take for example the question of whether he is a saint or a politician. He is both: The theory of the ends of life explains why. That ethics and spiritual pursuits are incompatible with politics is a relatively new idea, going back to Machiavelli—as we said in our Introduction. But there are exceptions. Max Weber, a great modern thinker, tells us that "the ethic of responsibility" (political ethics) and the "ethic of ultimate ends" are not "absolute contrasts." Only those who are "spiritually dead," he suggests, would think otherwise: "an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute a genuine man—a man who *can* have the 'calling for politics.'"[76] Certainly, Gandhi was not spiritually dead. And he certainly had a calling for politics. All those who have such a calling, and are not spiritually dead, can also combine the two ethics.

74. Ibid.

75. See C. N. Patel, *Mahatma Gandhi in His Gujarati Writings* (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1981).

76. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 127.

3

# The Modern Indian Political Canon

Indian political thought[1] had a canon of its own at least since the time of Kautilya's *Arthasastra* (end of fourth century BC).[2] Because of this there was a recognizably Indian mode of political thinking. However, this ceased to be the case by about the nineteenth century, when the Western canon was introduced into modern India. Modern Indian thinkers, whether of the liberal or Marxist persuasion, began to follow their own canon, as if an Indian canon had never existed. There were, of course,

1. This essay is published here with permission of the editors of *The Review of Politics*, University of Notre Dame.

2. The date of *Arthasastra* is disputed among scholars. According to Romila Thapar, parts of it go back to the fourth century BC, and the present form of the text to about the third century AD (*Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* [London: Allen Lane, 2002], pp. 184–85). The standard English translation of this work (used in this chapter), is R. Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthasastra*, parts 1, 2, and 3 (Delhi: Banarsidas, 1997).

exceptions to this—M. K. Gandhi being the most important. He updated the old Indian canon and made the innovated version suitable for a recognizably Indian way of thinking about modern politics. This chapter is a critical examination of his achievements in this regard. It begins with a brief account of the old canon, which provides the necessary background for the present discussion.

## THE ANCIENT INDIAN POLITICAL CANON

By about the end of the fourth century BC, four ideas had attained canonical status in Indian political thought. First, a plurality of sciences (*vidyas*)—among them the science of politics (*danda niti*)—were recognized as being indispensable for human flourishing. Second, monarchy was accepted as the normal form of government. Third, a hierarchical order of society, based on the four *varnas* or "castes," was endorsed as the right form of human society. And fourth, the overall aim of political science was to create the cultural conditions necessary for the pursuit of the four great ends of life, the *purusharthas*—ethical goodness (dharma), wealth and power (artha), pleasure (kama), and the pursuit of spiritual transcendence (moksha).

These four ideas received their formal recognition in Kautilya's *Arthasastra*. Subsequent writers such as Kamandaki in the fifth century AD, Somadeva in the tenth century, and the author of *Sukraniti* in the fourteenth century, all followed the Kautilya canon more or less faithfully.[3] The great epics of India, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, were careful to pay due attention to the canon. So were the works in the dharmasastra tradition, such as Manu's *Dharmasastra*. The same was true even of the *Kamasutra*, a work on sexual pleasure. Major writers

3. See *Nitisara* or *The Elements of Polity by Kamandaki*, ed. Raja Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, revised with English translation by Sisir Kumar Mitra (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1982); *Niti Vakyamritan of Somadeva Suri*, ed. Ramachandra Malaviya, with extensive Hindi commentary (Varanasi: Vidyabhavana Sasmkrta Grantamala, 1972); and K. B. Sarkar, *The Sukraniti* (New York: AMS Press, 1974).

in secular Sanskrit literature, such as Kalidasa (fl. fifth century AD), were all mindful of the canonical status of these ideas. Given their importance and longevity,[4] examining them in some detail is necessary. For reasons of space, however, I shall limit the enquiry primarily to the *Arthasastra*.

The *Arthasastra* opens the study of the science of politics with a broader enquiry into the need for knowledge of the other sciences known in its day—*anvikshiki* (philosophy), the Vedas, and economics. The implication was that political science, though necessary, was not sufficient to bring about all the conditions necessary for human flourishing. The latter required the contributions of philosophy, the Vedas, and economics. Thus, from the very start, *Arthasastra* was mindful of the need for the knowledge of the other sciences for a thorough understanding of the science of politics.

How many sciences were necessary for full human flourishing was itself a matter of debate. That these issues were debated tells us something about the level of intellectual vitality and sophistication of the times. Kautilya mentions three schools opposed to his position. Whether they were contemporary schools or schools belonging to the past is not clear. His lack of detailed analysis of their claims suggests the latter. In any case, the school of Manavah maintained that only three sciences were needed, since philosophy could be considered as an offshoot of the science of the Vedas. The school of Brahaspathi, on the other hand, held that only two sciences—politics and economics—were needed, since the other two sciences were "a cloak for those conversant with the ways of the world" (1.2.5). According to the school of Usanas, only one science was needed—the science of politics. "For, with it are bound up undertakings connected with all the sciences" (1.2.7).

Against this background Kautilya advances his own position: "Four indeed is the number of sciences," says Kautilya. Since with their help one

4. For over a millennium these canonical ideas made their appearance in works in the *Arthasasta* tradition. See U. N. Ghoshal, *A History of Indian Political Ideas* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 83, 112, 247, 348, 476–77, 496–97.

can learn what is spiritual good [dharma] and material well-being [artha], therefore the sciences are so called" (1.2.8–9).

Philosophy was placed first on the list of sciences. By philosophy was meant the discipline that investigates "by means of reasoning" (1.2.11) the internal structure of all the sciences. Philosophy's business was not to question the basic assumptions of the sciences: To make reasonable and basic assumptions was the prerogative of the sciences themselves. The role of philosophy by contrast, was to investigate whether the claims made were rationally consistent and intelligible. Thus, philosophy examined "the strength and weakness" of the three sciences, what was spiritual good and spiritual evil according to the teachings of the Vedas, what was material profit and material loss in economics, and what constituted good policy and bad policy in political science (1.2.11). That is to say, without the techniques of philosophy, no coherent understanding of any of these sciences was possible. As such, philosophy was a precondition for a thorough and systematic understanding of any branch of knowledge.

It is not surprising that Kautilya is effusive in his praise of philosophy. It "confers benefit on the people, keeps the mind steady in adversity and prosperity and brings about proficiency in thought, speech and action" (1.2.11). Philosophy is "the lamp of all sciences," a lamp that dispels the darkness of ignorance and inconsistency (1.2.12). He mentions by name the Samkhya, the Yoga, and the Lokayata schools of philosophy known in his day. The first two dealt with the issue of spiritual liberation while the third dealt with the issue of materialism—allowing the inference that philosophy was neutral and "secular" as far as the basic assumptions of the various systems of knowledge were concerned. Its distinctive role was to make the sciences argumentative in their procedure.

As modern scholars have noted, philosophy according to the ancient Indian canon does not mean what it means today in the modern West.[5] Modern Western philosophy (or at least certain branches of it)

5. For a recent discussion of the meaning *of anvikshiki* (philosophy), see Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988), pp. 263–86.

is liable to be hostile to spiritual philosophy generally—a liability that Indian philosophy, ancient and modern, does not carry. Philosophy according to the old Indian canon occupies a neutral position between materialism and spiritualism. This neutrality becomes very clear when we turn to the role it plays in the science of the Vedas, second on Kautilya's list.

The science of the Vedas deals with "revealed truths," that is, truths whose ultimate justification rests directly on the "seeing" of the seers and only indirectly on reason. Such truths are concerned with the ultimate meaning of existence, the nature of the immaterial atman or *purusha* or self, and its relationship to the supreme Self. The science of the Vedas is an integral part of the human sciences. The Vedas also concern themselves with the ultimate basis of ethical values, worship, religious sacrifices, rituals, and chants used in worship, and the like. The study of these aspects of the Vedas depended on a host of subsidiary sciences, such as grammar, phonetics, prosody, and astronomy.

The crucial issue in the science of the Vedas from the perspective of the present discussion is its epistemology. The knowledge of revealed truths is said to be derived from the internal spiritual "experience" (*anubhava*) of the "seers." Such knowledge is not derived in the first instance from reason or empirical sources. As far as revealed truths are concerned, "seeing" has priority over reasoning. It may be said that in the beginning was "seeing." Only after "seeing" do thinking, reasoning, speaking, writing, and acting come.

Even so, philosophy has a role to play in the development of the science of the Vedas. It delves into the data provided by the seers and helps produce systems of philosophy called "*darsana*" (literally, "what is seen"). The basic assumptions of the well-known six systems of Indian "philosophy"—Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Visesika, Mimamsa, and Vedanta—rest ultimately on the authority of the Vedas. But that is not the whole of it. These systems of spiritual "philosophy" can develop only when they become argumentative, which can happen only if philosophy as a neutral discipline intervenes. That is to say, the very development of the

spiritual "philosophies" depends on *anvikshiki*, to use the original name for philosophy.

Two points are noteworthy here. The first is that according to the old canon the science of revealed truths does have a place among the human sciences. That the premier text of Indian political philosophy should say this makes the saying very striking. In comparative terms, it is as if Machiavelli were to say that theology is an integral part of the human sciences. However that might be, the revealed truths of the Vedas were open to the investigation of human reason. What originates in "seeing" is subjected to rational investigation. Only such investigation can establish their status as science (*vidya*). Indeed, from such investigation the six systems of philosophy already mentioned arose.

The second noteworthy feature of the old canon is the relationship of the science of the Vedas to philosophy. There is no hint in the *Arthasastra* of any incompatibility, much less of active hostility, between the two. Distinction does not imply or require opposition. The presumed harmony between the two is an important aspect of the ancient canon of Indian political thought. That political science, which is concerned with power interests, should recognize the validity of the science of the Vedas is something that would have a lasting impact on the entire history of Indian political philosophy.

The science of economics is third on Kautilya's list. It maintains its relative independence from the other sciences. He does not go into a detailed analysis of this science, being content with mentioning that agriculture, cattle breeding, and trade are the chief sources of wealth production. Most important, however, he points out that success in both domestic policy and foreign policy depends on the treasury and the strength of the economy (1.4.1–2).

Turning now to political science itself, the *Arthasastra* makes five points that are highly relevant to the present discussion. The first is that political science is the science of maintaining and protecting a wealthy and powerful political community or a territory inhabited by people. "The source of livelihood of men is wealth, in other words, the earth inhabited by people. The science which is the means of the attainment and

protection of that earth is the Science of Politics" (15.1.1–2). Second, political science is necessary for protecting humans from "the law of fishes" (*matsya nyaya*), according to which the strong swallows the weak (1.4.13–15). The natural tendency of humans is to dominate one another unilaterally. The political order is a remedy against this tendency. The remedy consists of just punishment or the exercise of the Rod. From the symbol of the Rod, political science derives its other name, *danda niti*, the science of the just application of *danda*, or punishment. The political order, to this extent, is a coercive order, but coercion applied only in the interest of justice. Punishments, states *Arthasastra*, should be neither severe nor lax but "fitting" (1.4.7–10).

Third, monarchy is the accepted form of government. In his domestic policy, the monarch is obliged to enforce the hierarchical social order based on *varna* or "caste." In his foreign policy, however, he is free to promote the power interests of the state. It is in the nature of states to seek to expand, conquer, and subjugate. It was the ambition of every king to become one day a king of kings or a conqueror. The symbol of conquest was the wheel (chakra), from which was derived the title of the conqueror, *chakravarti*—the wielder of the wheel. Once set in motion, the wheel moves in all directions—north, south, east, and west—until it conquers everything before it or is stopped by another wheel similarly in motion. Hence, the second title of the conqueror, *digvijayi*, or the conqueror of the four quarters. The state system as envisaged in the old canon was an imperial war-system.

The science of politics, then, is also the science of acquisition and expansion. It has "for its purpose the acquisition of things not possessed, the preservation of things possessed, the augmentation of things preserved and the bestowal of things augmented on a worthy recipient. On it is dependent the orderly maintenance of worldly life" (1.4.3–4).

Fourth, political science has an indispensable positive cultural role to play in society. Without political science establishing conditions of order and stability, the other sciences would not be able to flourish: "The means of ensuring the pursuit of philosophy, the three Vedas

and economics is the Rod, wielded by the king" (1.4.3). Again, "the three sciences have their root in the just administration of the Rod" (1.5.1).

Finally and most important, political science is the indispensable means of creating the cultural conditions necessary for the pursuit of the great ends of human existence, the *purusharthas* (1.4.11). It is as if humans cannot attain their destiny, both material and spiritual, without the support of political science. *Arthasastra* considers this point so important that it takes the unusual step of repeating it several times. To begin with, the king himself should set an example to his subjects by demonstrating how the *purusharthas* may be successfully pursued. "He should enjoy sensual pleasures without contravening his spiritual good and material well-being; he should not deprive himself of pleasures. He should devote himself equally to the three goals of life which are bound up with one another. For, any one of the three, viz., spiritual good, material well-being and sensual pleasures, if excessively indulged in, does harm to itself as well as to the other two" (1.7.3–5). As far as political science is concerned, however, artha has relative primacy, because "spiritual good and sensual pleasures depend on material well-being" (1.7.7). Again, the pursuit of these goals being so important, the education of the prince should include training in the pursuit of the *purusharthas* (1.17.33). The same point is made in 15.1.64: "He [the royal preceptor] should instruct him [the prince] in what conduces to spiritual and material good, not in what is spiritually and materially harmful."

It comes as no surprise that *Arthasastra* ends with a strong plea on behalf of the *purusharthas*. The connection between political science and the *purusharthas* could not have been better defended. Ostensibly, political science has no higher end than the defense of the theory of the *purusharthas*; Kautilya apparently wrote his work to establish this truth. One need only read the penultimate sentence of the entire work to grasp this: "This science brings into being and preserves dharma, artha, and kama, and destroys spiritual evil, material loss, and hatred" (15.1.72).

## THE PLACE OF ARTHA AMONG THE FO *PURUSHARTHAS*

Given the importance that the old canon had attached to the theory of the *purusharthas* it is useful to give, at this stage of our argument, a brief account of it and of the position of artha therein. The term "*purushartha*" is made up of two Sanskrit terms: *purusha*, meaning "spirit," and *artha* meaning (in this instance), "for the sake of." It therefore carries the literal meaning of "that which is done for the sake of the immaterial spirit." In Indian philosophical anthropology, humans are understood to be composites of nature (*prakriti*) and spirit (*purusha*). The former provides the material/biological/psychological substratum of human personality, and the latter its spiritual foundation. Accordingly, human activities are seen, ultimately, as those that are pursued for the sake of the *purusha*. This reference to the *purusha* gives ultimate meaning to all human activities: material, psychological, ethical, aesthetic, as well as spiritual. It is not that the body and its interests do not have their own relatively autonomous purposes, but in ethical and philosophical terms those purposes acquire their full human significance only insofar as they retain a reference, however remote, to the interests of the *purusha*. Any human activity that deliberately excludes this reference is considered pro tanto, not beneficial to human well-being.[6]

The position occupied by artha among the *purusharthas* varied according to the different philosophical traditions. In the *Arthasastra* tradition, as we saw above, it played a very crucial role: It operated interactively with the other three, and there was no suggestion of any incompatibility between it and moksha (1.3.14). Later works in *Arthasastra* tradition, such as the fifth century *Kamandaki Nitisara*, did the same.[7] However, in the

6. For more on this see A. J. Parel, *Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 5–6.

7. The *Nitisara* of Kamandaki, II, vol. 17, pp. 41–42, adds moksha by name to the list of the *purusharthas*. It proudly states that it is an abridgement of the "mighty ocean" of the *Arthasastra*; and calls Kautilya "our guru," p. 37.

*mokshasastra* traditions, namely, in the six systems of Indian philosophy, artha had a very low status and was treated as though it was considered incompatible with the serious pursuit of moksha. The pursuit of moksha, according to these systems, required a gradual withdrawal from the real world of politics and economics. As a result artha became marginalized to the point of being treated as a negative value. The consequences were disastrous. As V. Kane remarks, intellectuals from the eleventh century onward took no interest in the sciences of politics and economics, being totally committed to "mental gymnastics about logic, Vedanta, Poetics and similar subjects."[8] Interest in artha became so low that, as Sheldon Pollock points out, "even commentarial literature" on the subject was stunted, and "the discourse on polity" was absorbed within the *dharmasastra* tradition.[9] The neglect of artha continued into the nineteenth century. The thinker who did more than others to rescue and modernize it was Mahatma Gandhi.

## STABILITY AND CHANGE

No political culture can long survive without its canon. And no political canon can long continue without timely change. There is a subtle but real connection between canon, stability, and change. A political canon reflects stability, but to be relevant, it should also be open to change. However, because of the preponderance of the moksha tradition in Indian culture of the medieval period, the old political canon did not develop. This remained the case even after the fourteenth century, when a radically new political canon—the sharia—was introduced in Indian territories under Muslim rule. This is not the place to raise the question of why the Indian political canon and the sharia did not enter into a creative engagement

8. See V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, vol. 2, part 2, 2nd ed. (Poona: Bhandarkar Institute, 1974), p. 1623.

9. Sheldon Pollock, *The Ends of Man at the End of Premodernity* (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2005), pp. 63–64.

with one another. However, the fact that no such engagement took place needs to be noted. Indian political thinkers of the Middle Ages were not unaware of the sharia, but they chose to do nothing more than take note of it. Sukraniti, for example, mentioned the "theory of the Yavanas" (the medieval Indian name for Muslims) and included it in its list of thirty-two sciences.[10] "Yavana philosophy is that which recognizes God as the invisible creator of this universe, and recognizes virtue and vice without reference to *Sruti* [the Vedas] and *Smriti* [Tradition], and which believes that *Sruti* contains a separate religious system."[11] The Yavanas, noted *Sukraniti*, did not follow the caste system. They "have all the four castes mixed together. They recognize authority other than the Vedas and live in the north and west. Their *Sastras* have been framed for their welfare by their own masters."[12]

Totally different, however, was the reception accorded to the Western canon, introduced by the colonial state in the nineteenth century. It produced an unprecedented intellectual ferment in India that made Indians look critically at their social and political institutions. The role that the ascetic tradition played in Indian culture came under critical scrutiny. The same happened to the caste system and monarchy itself. Western ideas such as individual liberty, equality, the right to self-determination, nationalism, and the religious neutrality of the state were warmly welcomed.

However, there was one striking aspect to this welcome. It was as if the welcome party was unaware of the existence of India's ancient political canon. Both Indian liberals and Indian Marxists seemed to suffer from cultural and intellectual amnesia. In the case of the latter, the forgetfulness was perhaps deliberate. Marxists forsook Gandhi and took after Mao, Gramsci, Lukacs, and others, believing that Marxism was the new universal canon superseding all others, whether Indian, Chinese, or Islamic.

10. See *Sukraniti*, chapter 4, section 111, p. 153.

11. Ibid., p. 156.

12. Ibid., p. 64.

Without question, modern Indian political thinkers, including Indian Marxists, wrote about Indian political issues—theory of history, colonialism, nationalism, self-determination, socialism, class war, individual liberty, equality, and a host of others. But their writings produced what may be termed "political thought in India." They did not produce "Indian political thought," if by Indian political thought is meant a body of thought produced with the help of and within an Indian framework of thought and analysis. The framework of thought and analysis that these writers employed was normally either liberal or Marxist. Take for example A. Appadorai's classic *Documents on Political Thought in India*.[13] As the very title indicates, these volumes are about political thought in India, not about "Indian political thought." The writers in question were, of course, writing about India, but only a few of them were conscious of the need to use an Indian framework of analysis. There is some truth in Sri Aurobindo's 1918 criticism that "the last generation merely attempted to imitate and reproduce with a servile fidelity the ideals and forms of the West."[14]

However that might be, India once had a political canon of its own. If it was to have a new canon, the old one had to be updated. Updating an old canon is no easy task. The charisma of the writer or writers has to respond to the needs of the times. India was fortunate to have had a number of great writers who contributed important elements toward the updating of a modern Indian political canon. Among them were Rabindranath Tagore, B. G. Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, S. Radhakrishnan, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, and B. R. Ambedkar. However, M. K. Gandhi was the thinker who pulled all the elements together and inaugurated the modern Indian political canon.

13. A. Appadorai, ed., *Documents on Political Thought in India*, vol. 1 (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1973), and vol. 2 (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1976).

14. A. Appadorai, *Indian Political Thinking from Naoroji to Nehru* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 151. The opening lines of this book verify my point here: "The object of this book is to survey the history of *political thought in India* from 1857 to 1964," p. xi. Italics added.

## SEVERAL IDEAS DELETED

There is no doubt that Gandhi wanted to be an innovator of the old Indian political canon. He could become one, however, only if he were prepared to delete what was obsolete, add what was new, and preserve what was essential. This undertaking was exactly his strategy. "My swaraj is to keep intact the genius of our civilization," he had written. "I want to write many new things but they must be all written on the Indian slate. I would gladly borrow from the West when I can return the amount with decent interest."[15] At the same time, he did not want to drown himself, as he put it, "in the waters of our ancestors' well." Preserving everything from the past would indeed be suicidal. The innovator's task was to increase the patrimony of the past and make it productive. "I believe that it is our duty to augment the legacy of our ancestors and to change it into current coin and make it acceptable to the present age."[16] His efforts to update the old political canon are best seen in the light of these sentiments. I shall sketch below the process of deletions and additions that was involved.

Deleted from the old canon were ideas relating to the monarchy and the caste system. The "law of fishes," the old justification for the political order, was dropped in favor of the idea of swaraj or self-rule. Likewise, the idea that political power was something that had to expand, conquer, and subdue was replaced by the idea that political power was the legitimate means of coercion solely for purposes of internal order and external security. Disposing of the monarchy was relatively painless. It did not require civil war, revolution, or regicide. By the mid-twentieth century, the rajahs and maharajahs were pensioned off and their territories integrated into republican India. Gandhi's political theory in general and his theory of nonviolence in particular contributed greatly to India's transition from monarchy to republic.

15. M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, May 26, 1924, p. 210.

16. *CW*, 51, p. 259.

Dealing with the caste system was an altogether different matter. Although by the 1890s Gandhi had become convinced of the illegitimacy of the system, he was painfully aware of the fact that the system had its sanction in the Vedas (Rg Veda, 90: 11–12) and the *Bhagavad-Gita* (4: 13; 18: 41–48). He, therefore, had to tread cautiously. He first took the position that "caste" in its original form as *varna* was egalitarian and that its corruption into *jati* (the assignation of caste by birth) was "a hideous travesty of the original." Instead of the original four divisions, there was now a multitude of castes—clear evidence "that the law of *varna* [had] become a dead letter."[17] By 1935 he took a firm stand against the caste system: "Caste Has to Go" was the title of an essay that he published in that year.[18] The campaign against the practices of "untouchability" soon became one of the most important projects of the new canon.

However, the scriptural justification of the caste system raised its own difficulties, which forced Gandhi to examine the rules of interpretation of the scriptures. The issue became critical as B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the so-called untouchables (and the future draftsman of the new Indian Constitution), threatened to abandon Hinduism altogether, arguing that nothing less than the rejection of the scriptures themselves was needed.

Gandhi sought to find a way of getting rid of the caste system while safeguarding the integrity of the scriptures. A correct interpretation of the Scriptures, he argued, would show that the caste system had only a historical, not permanent, validity. This position followed from the criteria of the interpretation of the scriptures that he employed. The criteria he chose were conscience, reason, learning, holiness of life, and the inner experience of the truths to be interpreted.

> The scriptures properly so called can only be concerned with eternal verities and must appeal to any conscience, i.e., any heart whose eyes of understanding are opened. Nothing can be accepted as the

17. *CW*, 59, pp. 64, 66.

18. *CW*, 62, p. 121–22.

> word of God which cannot be tested by reason or is capable of being spiritually experienced. . . . Learning there must be but religion does not live by it. It lives in the experiences of its saints and seers, in their lives and sayings. When all the most learned commentators of the scriptures are utterly forgotten, the accumulated experience of the sages and saints will abide and be an inspiration for ages to come.[19]

One "eternal verity" that the Hindu scriptures taught was that humans were capable of self-determination, self-development, and spiritual liberation. All other facts about humans had to be interpreted in the light of this truth. The interpretation of the scriptures by saints and seers was more reliable than those by mere scholars. The former had spiritual experience of the truth they were interpreting; the latter lacked it altogether. Gandhi's point was that the Hindu scriptures, rightly interpreted, could favor the evolution of an egalitarian society. Seen in this light, the caste system as it had evolved in India had only historical, not permanent, validity. The scriptures, reinterpreted, would call for the end of the caste system. As historical awareness changed, so would the attitude toward caste. A combination of historical knowledge, spiritual experience, and sound reasoning led him to delete the caste system from the old Indian political canon.

As for the "law of fishes," he replaced it with the idea of self-rule or swaraj: All humans were free and capable of self-determination, self-development, and self-transcendence. According to the new canon, the justification for a democratic political order arises from this principle.

Deleted also was the notion that state power, of necessity, required expansion and conquest. According to the old theory, power was antinomian, a law unto itself, recognizing no other law. States tended to invoke national interest (*prajana swarth*) as their supreme law of conduct.[20] Gandhi's theory of nonviolence, which is not a pacifist theory but a theory

19. *CW*, 63, p. 153.

20. *HS*, p. 87.

of the legitimate use of coercive force, challenged the antinomian character of state power. The "law of fishes" did not constitute a moral law. It merely referred to a mode of behavior, a "faculty of acting," as Samuel Pufendorf in the seventeenth century was to point out.[21] Gandhi, going further, argued that the law of humanity required that states in their mutual relations could use power only for internal order and external security, and never for external expansion and imperial domination. What the world needed was not "absolutely independent states warring one against another but a federation of friendly interdependent states."[22] His demand for the end of modern colonialism was simultaneously a demand for a change in the old *Arthasastra* conception of state power.

## FOUR IDEAS ADDED

Updating the old canon required the addition of new ideas that came mostly from the West. They included the ideas of civic nationalism, the limited constitutional state, fundamental human rights, and modern political economy. Civic nationalism for Gandhi was a theory of political community. The nation was to take the place of caste. Though a Western ideology, it had its cultural antecedents in Indian history. Already the *Arthasastra* had spoken of India as a sphere of imperial expansion (a *chakravartin* sphere) stretching from the Himalayas in the north to seas to the south, and a thousand *yojanas* across (9.1.18). In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi vigorously defended the view that Indians constituted a nation,

21. See J. D. M. Derrett, "Social and Political Thought and Institutions," in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. A. L. Bashm (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 124–40. As Derrett at p. 140 points out, the famous "law of fishes" migrated to the West and found a place in Talmudic literature, "when via Spinoza" it found a place in Western political thought. Pufendorf criticized Spinoza for speaking of it in terms of a moral law. Fishes, he pointed out, do not have a "right" but only "a faculty of acting," which by itself did not indicate a right. See Pufendorf, *De Jure Naturae et Gentium* (1688), vol. 2, trans. C. H. W. A. Oldfather (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), bk. 2, chap. 2, p. 159.

22. *CW*, 25, pp. 481–82.

arguing that all Indians—Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Jews, and others—had a shared sense of history and culture.[23]

The old canon was no longer adequate to deal with the modern reality of a multireligious and multilingual India. The viability of modern India depended on the availability of a modern theory of political community that could weld the country's multiplicities into a working unity. Gandhi believed that civic nationalism was that theory. Its defense became part of the new canon.

Nationalism, however, was not a monolithic ideology, as Gandhi was soon to learn. The separatist Muslims wanted a nationalism based on religion; a minority of Hindus wanted a nationalism based on Hindutva (Hinduness); and the vast majority of Indians, under the banner of the Indian National Congress, wanted civic nationalism. The political history of modern India is a struggle for supremacy by these three forms of nationalism—M. A. Jinnah (1875–1948) taking the leadership of religious nationalism, V. D. Savarkar (1882–1966) taking that of ethnic or Hindutva nationalism, and Gandhi taking that of civic nationalism.

What distinguished civic nationalism from the other two was its universalistic core. According to Gandhi, a civic nation is a people who, in addition to inhabiting a specific territory and sharing a common history, share a sense of justice, rights, and duties. The civic nation attaches the greatest importance to the individual as a self-determining and self-developing being and as a bearer of certain inalienable rights. Of the three forms of nationalism, only the civic nation recognizes and respects these rights. This recognition and this respect constitute its inner core. A civic national identity alone could transcend all prepolitical identities, whether based on religion or language or caste or ethnicity. Civic nationalism recognizes and respects these identities, too, but within a broader context of a pan-national identity. Briefly, civic nationalism is a component part of the new Indian political canon.

23. *HS*, pp. 51–57.

*Hind Swaraj* is the primary text of Gandhi's civic nationalism. In 1946, on the eve of national independence, he coined the wonderful metaphor of the "oceanic circle" to describe India as a civic nation. Contrasted with the "oceanic circle" (the new India) was the pyramid—the metaphor for the old, hierarchical India. The term "oceanic" signified inclusiveness, and the term "circle" signified the formal distinction of the "oceanic circle" from other nations. The center from which the "oceanic circle" is drawn is the individual. From the center as many concentric circles as the individual wishes may be drawn, so long as they do not break the outer circumference of the "oceanic circle." That is to say, Indians may belong to as many small, inner circles as they wish: There would be room for all in the "oceanic circle." Whichever circles to which they belong, individuals are not a collection of isolated atoms but are held together by a "free and voluntary play of mutual forces." "Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it."[24] The "oceanic circle" has a special place in the new canon.

Gandhi's notion of the state that would be compatible with the "oceanic circle" is a "parliamentary swaraj according to the wishes of the Indian people": a mixture of the Indian idea of self-rule and the Western idea of representative government.[25] The phrase "according to the wishes of the Indian people" emphasizes the notion of a government based on consent. The state according to the new canon would be neither the old *Arthasastra* type nor the new Hobbesean/Machiavellian type: It would be a constitutionally limited democracy.

24. *CW*, 85, p. 33.

25. *CW*, 19, p. 278.

The Gandhian state would have four additional characteristics. First, it would be secular: Artha (the category to which the state belongs) is a secular, not religious, category. Religion had nothing to do with the structure of India as an "oceanic circle."[26] Second, state sovereignty is not absolute but relative to the needs of peace between states. What "the better mind of the world" desires is "universal interdependence" rather than absolute independence.[27] Third, as explained in his short treatise *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place* (1945), the state would work in tandem with the organs of civil society, namely, nongovernmental organizations.[28] Finally, it would operate according to the general principles of Gandhian nonviolence. Those principles recognize the right of the state to self-defense even by military means, if necessary. As he stated at the constitutional conference of 1931 held[29] in London (the only such conference he ever attended), a state that did not have control over its defense could not be a responsible state. The ability to defend itself is "the essence" of a state's existence. At the same time, the Gandhian state would also have the obligation to develop civilian means of self-defense and to engage in progressive disarmament. What the new canon is trying to achieve is a reasonable balance between moderate political realism and the imperative of world peace.

Turning now to fundamental human rights—the third addition that Gandhi made to the modern Indian canon—they are quintessentially part of modernity. They had their historical origin in Western thought. Yet when transferred to Indian conditions, Gandhi managed to give human rights a recognizably Indian face—that of satyagraha. As he famously defined it, satyagraha was "a method of securing rights by personal suffering: it is the reverse of resistance by arms."[30] The Gandhian

26. *HS*, pp. 52–57.

27. *CW*, 25, p. 481.

28. For the full text, see *CW*, 75, pp.146–66.

29. *CW*, 48, p. 304.

30. *HS*, p. 90.

method of civil disobedience is different from the Western method, even from that made famous by Henry David Thoreau in the mid-nineteenth century.[31] The Western method was open to the use of violence in defense of human rights even in internal politics. Gandhi's method, by contrast, made "personal suffering" a means of defense. As Joan Bondurant has observed, of all the elements that constitute satyagraha, self-suffering is "the least acceptable to a Western mind."[32] Historically, the Western mind had accepted violence—such as the violence involved in street riots or in political revolutions, such as the French Revolution—as a means of asserting human rights. Gandhi's method marks an advance on the Western method. Accepting "self-suffering" does not mean seeking it in a pathological manner. It simply means accepting peacefully "the consequences of disobedience." This practice, he pointed out, "was what Daniel did when he disobeyed the laws of the Medes and the Persians."[33] What makes civil disobedience "civil"—not violent—is precisely the peaceful acceptance of the penalty attached to civil disobedience.

Apart from modifying the Western mode of civil disobedience into satyagraha, Gandhi made an additional contribution to Indian political thought: He formally introduced fundamental human rights into the political discourse of modern India. This introduction was accomplished in 1931 by means of the famous resolution on "Fundamental Rights and Economic Changes," jointly drafted by Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi personally presented the resolution at the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress—which assured its easy acceptance. As Granville Austin has pointed out, this resolution is the "spiritual antecedent" of the Directive Principles of the new Indian Constitution.[34]

31. Satyagraha was invented in 1906, a year before Gandhi read Thoreau. *CW*, 61, p. 401.

32. Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 29.

33. *CW*, 16, p. 51.

34. G. Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 56–57.

Gandhi's fourth addition to the modern Indian canon, strictly speaking, is not an addition but a reintroduction. For, as we saw above, economics had canonical status in the *Arthasastra* tradition. What he did was to give modern economics its due place in the new canon. His initial access to modern economic thought was mostly through the economic writings of John Ruskin—*The Political Economy of Art* (1857), reissued in 1880 under the title *"A Joy for Ever": And Its Place in the Market*, and *Unto This Last* (1860)—and of a host of other friendly critics of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism.[35] The Gandhian economic corpus—writings on khadi, rural economic development, options for the poor, appropriate technology, the relationship of economic development to moral development, and the like—is very substantial indeed. The scale of Indian poverty so affected him that in 1921 he took the dramatic step of changing his bourgeois attire to the much despised loincloth of the poor villager. The gesture was meant not to glorify but to critique poverty. The economic emancipation of the poor was as important to him as the political emancipation of the nation itself. Political emancipation without economic emancipation would be nothing more than a cruel joke played on the poor. Swaraj (self-rule) had to come in all its four forms—political, moral, spiritual, and economic.

Ruskin was the single most important influence on Gandhi's economic thought. *Unto This Last* produced, Gandhi tells us, "an instantaneous and practical transformation" in his life.[36] He wanted Indians to understand Ruskin's basic orientation, and to this end, in 1908, he published a paraphrase of that book in his weekly newspaper, *Indian Opinion*. Later it was published as a booklet under the title *Sarvodaya* ("the welfare of all"), a name that he gave to his economic philosophy as well.[37]

Ruskin's overall aim was to fight the antihuman elements that had crept into nineteenth-century British capitalism and to bring a reformed

35. See Appendix I of *HS*.

36. *CW*, 39, p. 239.

37. *CW*, 8, pp. 239–40.

capitalism into the mainstream of Western civilization. This is not the place to go into a detailed analysis of Ruskin, but the main points that Gandhi took from him may be briefly noted. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all. Labor is an equalizing activity, and even in the industrial age, the labor of the artist, the craftsman, and the peasant has great economic as well as civilizing value. Given humans are body-soul composites, soul-force is as much a motivating force in economic activities as is enlightened self-interest. Granted that economics is the science of wealth, it is a mistake to see wealth only as possessions of exchangeable value. The wealth of a nation consists above all in its people who enjoy health, freedoms, and moral dispositions that enable them to use their wealth fittingly. It is necessary, therefore, to shift the focus from wealth as possessions to wealth as people. The aim of a sound political economy should be to meet the material needs, not just of the greatest number, but of every member of society. A reformed capitalism can accomplish all this only when it integrates principles of ethics and virtue into its economic practice.

Applying these ideas to India, Gandhi became convinced that the elimination of mass poverty was a primary task of political independence. In general terms, this called for investments into areas that would foster development from below. It required production by the masses rather than mass production. The right to private property was to be respected, but within the bounds of social responsibility. What was surplus to an individual's reasonable needs was to be treated as if one were its trustee. Modern industrial capitalism had two defects that required urgent remedies. The first was the damage it was doing to nature, urban areas, and the countryside. The second was its inability either to satiate the greed of the rich or to alleviate the misery of the poor. The first required "appropriate technology," and the second required economics with a social conscience that could humanize the forces of the market.

Gandhi is not Gandhi unless he is able to write on the Indian slate. Regarding modern economics, he managed to find enough room on that slate to write something Indian. Quite ingeniously, he found support for

the views mentioned above in the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the *Yogasutra*. He interpreted the first verse of the *Ishopanishad* as teaching a lesson of great economic significance: God alone is the sovereign of the material world. Humans may enjoy it as its trustees, renouncing any claim to absolute ownership. In doing so, they should avoid coveting what belongs to fellow human beings. The *Gita* according to Gandhi taught the lesson of work ethics: No one was entitled to food unless he or she had worked for it. Two virtues listed in Yoga philosophy—*astea* (prohibition against theft) and *aparigraha* (moderation in possessive desires)—with due modification were converted into economic virtues necessary for healthy, modern economic activities.

## TWO IDEAS RETAINED

Gandhi retained two pivotal ideas from the old canon—with some modification, of course. The first concerned the need for a plurality of sciences for the good life, and the second, the need for a plurality of life-goals, the *purusharthas*—as we already saw in chapter two.

The old canon had held that there was no necessary incompatibility between revealed truths and truths based on reason. With this in the background, Gandhi had no difficulty in accepting modern science and its methods. In all his activities—as lawyer, political activist, social reformer, religious thinker—he scrupulously applied the methods of modern science. One example out of many will suffice—the advice that he gave to the workers engaged in the cottage industry of khadi (home-spun cotton cloth). This was not a highly educated group—most were barely literate. Yet he urged them to learn modern scientific methods. The passage, despite its length, is worth citing:

> A person who is scientifically inclined does not take the truth of anything for granted; he tries to prove it himself. In this way he develops his own intellect and also obtains knowledge of the potentialities of things. Why does an apple fall off the tree, why does

it not fly up? It is said that this question arose in Newton's mind and he discovered the law of gravitation.

Is the earth flat like a plate? Is it stationary? Such questions arose in Galileo's mind and he discovered that the earth is spherical like an orange and revolves on its axis. Such discoveries have produced great results.

A khadi worker should adopt a similar scientific attitude. Newton or Galileo did not ponder over the problem of *Daridranarayana* and of serving *Daridranarayana* [the poor masses]. They followed an intellectual quest. The khadi worker has however to find a solution to the problem of feeding the hungry masses. That is why their attitude should be all the more scientific.

... Many of my activities are undertaken in good faith or intuitively. But they are not conducted on the basis of inspiration alone; I have tried to place my convictions on a sound scientific foundation while propagating them. I have made and am still making all possible experiments based on reason and I encourage my co-workers to do so. [A complex problem] does involve a lot of statistics as also knowledge of economics, psychology, particularly of the Indian mind, and also of ethics. A mere statistical solution will not do, nor will a mere economic solution, because we cannot ignore our most fundamental and vital principles. We do not want to spread khadi through coercion. We want to do our work by changing people's sense of values and habits. Hence our researches should proceed from all angles.[38]

Gandhi's problem, then, was not with modern science and its methods,[39] but with the ideology that asserted that scientific truths and spiritual truths based on revelation were incompatible. He was deeply concerned

38. *CW*, 74, pp. 278–79.

39. This point is well made by Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph in *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 232–39.

about the impact that this ideology had had, and was still having, on modern Western civilization. It was promoting, he felt, a culture of unbelief in the name of positivistic reason. "This civilization is irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people in Europe that those who are in it appear to be half mad," he wrote in 1909.[40] His explanation for this phenomenon was that Western civilization was no longer able to maintain the right balance between the material aims and the spiritual aims of human life. In his language, the West was interested only in the pursuit of wealth, power, and pleasure (artha and kama), and not at all in that of dharma and moksha. This was a dangerous course to take: "This civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed."[41] He was anxious to protect modern Indian civilization from the onslaught of modern materialism. He believed that India was still "sound at the foundation." "What we have tested and found true on the anvil of experience, we dare not change."[42] The "foundation" and "the anvil of experience," he is referring to, are of course the "experience" by the seers of the divine. From the experiences of the seers, the sages, and the prophets, humanity comes to know the ultimate meaning of life. The new canon that he was trying to introduce sought to reconcile aspects of modernity with spirituality, science with religion, rational knowledge with spiritual experience. If Gandhi had anything to say about it, there would, indeed, be an Indian version of modernity.

An assumption present in Gandhi's philosophy is that "seeing" or "experiencing" has epistemological validity. His theory of compatibility between revealed truths, modern science, and the truths of political science, rests on this assumption. That he claimed such compatibility is evident from his life and writings. His *Autobiography*, for example, spoke of his desire "to see" the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face-to-face. This desire for "seeing," he said, brought him to the field of politics,

40. *HS*, p. 37.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., p. 66.

the field best suited in modern times to the pursuit of the highest vision of Truth.[43]

Thanks to Gandhi, the assumption of the harmony between the science of revealed truths and natural sciences became a distinguishing feature of the new Indian political canon. Indian theologies belong to the broad field of the human sciences. In his view, the Western notion that science alone is sufficient for human well-being is something that emerged from a particular direction that modern Western thought had taken. Such a notion does not apply elsewhere. The modern Indian political canon stands squarely against the claim that modern science (and philosophies that are subservient to it) is the only knowledge sufficient for human well-being. This is monism in the disguise of science. He rejects it in favor of a plurality of sciences. Two epistemologies would produce two types of knowledge—knowledge based on "experience" and knowledge based on positive reason.

## THE NEW CANON

Deletions and additions prepared the way for the emergence of a new set of modern ideas that have canonical status today—swaraj, satyagraha, sarvodaya, swadeshi, ahimsa, nationalism, constitutionalism, selfless public service (*anasakti yoga*), and the like. The concept of *purushartha* has been rethought, and the relationship of the four *purusharthas* inter se redefined in interactive rather than oppositional terms. The need for a plurality of different sciences for human well-being has been reaffirmed. Gandhi, in other words, has given India a new, modern *arthasastra* (political philosophy). Its main features may now be summarized.

All human beings are capable of swaraj, self-determination, self-development, and spiritual liberation. Indians in the past had belonged to a monarchy-based and caste-oriented political community; today they belong to a civic nation—the "oceanic circle."

43. *CW*, 39, p. 401.

Political science is a secular science, whose proximate ends are the maintenance of internal order, material prosperity, and external security. Its specific means is legitimate coercion according to the terms set by the constitution, statutes, principles of human rights, and universal dharma.[44] The state, being part of the sphere of artha, is a secular institution. Its coercive power is limited to maintaining internal order and external security; it does not extend to achieving domination over other states. The state is a member of a community of independent and interdependent states. The new *arthasastra* puts an end to the old *chakravartin* concept of the imperial state. In doing so, it changes the very notion of political power from one that seeks to expand limitlessly to one that limits itself to the requirements of internal order, world peace, interdependence, and universal dharma. The state that the new *arthasastra* envisages is a "parliamentary swaraj." It recognizes the fundamental rights of citizens and their freedom to protest nonviolently through the practice of satyagraha. It also recognizes the need for organizations of civil society with which it coordinates its own activities.

The economic system that is compatible with the new *arthasastra* is sarvodaya, a reformed form of capitalism that recognizes the principle of private property within the limits of social responsibility. Corresponding to the obligation to work is the right to the fruits of one's labor. The creation of wealth, a requirement of *purushartha*, has a positive human value, and poverty is a sign of human degradation, being the outcome of the mismanagement of national labor. What is surplus to one's reasonable needs should be held in trust for society. The centralization of economic power in the hands of the state does "greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress . . . the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the state."[45] The mode of wealth production should be consistent with the

44. These principles are nonviolence, truthfulness, uprightness, freedom from malice, compassion, and forbearance.

45. M. K. Gandhi, *Sarvodaya*, ed. B. Kumarappa (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1984), p. 74.

use of appropriate technology, the needs of natural environment, and the requirements of long-term sustainability. Though India needs industrialization, the kind of industrialization that it embarks upon should be consistent with principles of universal justice. It should learn from the past mistakes of industrialized societies.[46]

The dharma that corresponds to the new *arthasastra* is nonviolence. Two caveats save this ethic from becoming utopian. The first is the need to adapt it to the four different "fields" (communities) of nonviolence[47]—the family, the state, the religious community, and the world community of states. Nonviolence works differently in these fields. What works in one may not work in the others. It therefore needs constant adaptation to the requirements of the given field.

The second caveat concerns the "vast majority principle." The ethic of nonviolence would work only when the vast majority in a given field habitually practices it. Thus, "a state can be administered on a nonviolent basis only if the vast majority of the people are nonviolent."[48] The vast majority can become nonviolent only if conditions of justice and political stability prevail. The responsibility for bringing these conditions about rests as much with the state as with the political culture of ordinary citizens. There is a subtle link, then, between the public behavior of the state and the private behavior of its citizens. If the citizens want the state to behave nonviolently, they themselves should behave nonviolently toward one another. That is the implication of Gandhian nonviolence. And if there is a circle of nonviolently administered states, only then, can the relations between such states become nonviolent.

There is also a new conception of moksha, corresponding to the new *arthasastra*. Gandhi modernized the mode of pursuing moksha,

46. Gandhi repeatedly warned India of the dangers of copying the nineteenth-century model of industrialization. "We can never industrialize India, unless of course, we reduce our population from 350 million to 35 million or hit upon markets wider than our own and dependent on us. . . . We cannot industrialize ourselves, unless we make up our minds to enslave humanity." *CW*, 58, p. 400.

47. *CW*, 72, pp. 248–50, 271–72; 281–82.

48. *CW*, 71, p. 407.

making it less ascetical and more compatible with action in the political and economic fields. The minimum, necessary condition for its pursuit is commitment to Truth (in the Gandhian sense), supported by a reflective, spiritual life-style. The pursuit of moksha should not interfere with the secular character of the state. Gandhi's unique contribution to the new Indian canon has been to bring the pursuit of moksha into a dynamic relationship with the pursuit of artha—a secular activity. As A. L. Basham, the great interpreter of Indian civilization in the twentieth century, has remarked, "The theoretical purpose of the whole social and political structure of classical India was to promote moksha—to help as many individuals as possible to achieve it." The Indian seer, unlike the Chinese sage or the Hebrew prophet, thought "not in terms of the salvation of the whole people" but of individual human beings. The "fundamental individualism" involved in this, Basham thinks, is "perhaps the reason why India, unlike most other colonial countries, has taken enthusiastically to parliamentary democracy." Those who pursue moksha in the Gandhian mode exemplify the harmony between all human strivings. Few perhaps actually attain this harmony, "but the secret of the good life is to travel hopefully towards it."[49] Such is the distinctive requirement of the new Indian political canon.

There is, however, a lacuna in Gandhi's political thought. There is no creative dialogue in it with Marxism, which is in contrast to his fruitful dialogue with liberalism. Perhaps this is due to Marx's own all-knowing dogmatism. He made an either/or offer that Gandhi had to decline. Indian Marxists, in their turn, have not helped matters: They were and are bent on changing India on Marx's terms; they simply refuse to change Marxism on India's terms. This reluctance explains why Indian Marxism remains outside the modern Indian canon—why it belongs to the category of "political thought in India," rather than, strictly speaking, to Indian political thought.

49. A. L. Basham, ed., *A Cultural History of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 498–99.

As for the view of the modern Indian canon that basic human goals are compatible with one another, it stands in contrast to the Western liberal canon that they are incommensurable. Difference between the two canons is unavoidable. The best one can do here is to study the difference comparatively.

Gandhi's evaluation of India's colonial experience has been exemplary, for it did not produce any cultural schizophrenia in him. His sense of identity was so authentic that he could integrate Western ideas without undergoing postcolonial angst that afflicts so many today. The remedy against such angst lies in adopting the political canon he has inaugurated. Here his metaphor of the "slate" is helpful. He had no problem writing down many new things so long as the slate on which he was writing was Indian. So is his other metaphor of "capital and interest." If he borrowed the idea of human rights from the West, which he did, he paid back the capital with interest—in the form of satyagraha. If the new Indian political canon has borrowed certain ideas from the West, as it has, it is now in a position to pay something back to the West.

# 4

# Two Meanings of Swaraj

Swaraj is a basic concept in Gandhi's political philosophy. It is even more basic than nonviolence—a concept with which his name is universally associated. Nonviolence, for all its importance in his political philosophy, is still only a means to Swaraj; whereas swaraj, he states, "is a state of being of individuals and nations."[1] Swaraj is not a means to some other good, but a good in itself. Those who lack it, lack the one thing that makes them what they should be. To have swaraj is to have political selfhood. Not to have swaraj is the gravest political privation that individuals and nations can suffer. Attaining it and restoring it—if one had lost it—are duties of individuals and nations.

Gandhi's concept of swaraj has two meanings—that of nations and individuals. The swaraj of nations is called political swaraj or the state

1. *CW*, 20, p. 99.

with sovereign independence. The swaraj of individuals is called self-rule, self-discipline, or spiritual swaraj. The "*swa*" (self) in political swaraj is the civic nation, while the "*swa*" in individual swaraj is the citizen. His theory of political swaraj, as we argue below, is tied to his theory of civic nationalism.

Political swaraj, meaning a sovereign state formed through the process of self-determination, is a modern idea. It originated in the West in the eighteenth century: Nations have the right to self-determination and to have their own state despite any negative interference by other states, including any imperial state. Thanks to his conceptual framework, Gandhi is able to integrate political swaraj into his political philosophy without being syncretic. The reason for this is that political Swaraj belongs to the sphere of artha, and what belongs to that sphere fits into his conceptual framework of ends of human life. The state, in other words, is a *conditio sine qua non* of Gandhian political swaraj.

Individual self-rule is something else. It is a typically Indian idea originating in Hindu philosophy. "The root meaning of swaraj," writes Gandhi, "is self-rule. 'Swaraj' may, therefore, be rendered as disciplined rule from within.... 'Independence' has no such limitation. Independence may mean licence to do as you like. Swaraj is positive. Independence is negative.... The word swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which 'independence' often means."[2]

Self-rule is the outcome of the internal ordering of the passions of the senses by the mind under the guidance of the soul. According to Gandhi, self-rule is compatible with political swaraj, thanks to the theory of the ends of life. It is the combination of self-rule and political swaraj that gives Gandhi's political philosophy its originality. It is also the combination that distinguishes his theory of the state from the modern theories of the state.

2. *CW*, 45, pp. 263–64.

The scope of this chapter is to explore the two meanings of swaraj and to assess Gandhi's standing as a political thinker. The idea of political Swaraj, which we will consider first, developed by stages. It is important to know the history of this development so that we can avoid attributing to Gandhi opinions that he did not hold at any given stage of its development.

## FROM SWARAJ TO *SURAJYA*

Gandhi introduced the notion of political swaraj in 1909 in *Hind Swaraj*. Swaraj at this time meant nothing more than home rule or a state that enjoyed self-government within the empire. The idea of home rule was taken from the Irish Home Rule movement (1886–1920), with which Gandhi was very familiar. In particular, he was well acquainted with Alfred Webb (1834–1908), one of its leaders and an MP from Ireland (1890–1895). Webb was also the president of the Indian National Congress held in Madras in 1894. Gandhi pays special homage to him in Appendix II of *Hind Swaraj*. The excerpts in that Appendix are culled from Webb's edited work, *The People of India: Their Many Merits, by Many Who Have Known Them* (1900).

In 1921, in a preface to a new edition of *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi clarifies the meaning of swaraj. Here he introduces the distinction between individual swaraj and corporate swaraj: "I am individually working for self-rule pictured" in *Hind Swaraj*, he wrote, but "today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of parliamentary swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India."[3] This is an amended version of the 1909 teaching of *Hind Swaraj*: Parliamentary swaraj will be the form that any future government of India would take. The criticism of the British Parliament in chapter 5 should be taken as part of his broader criticism of modern civilization, rather than as a criticism of the institution of parliament as such. The criticism does not affect his position in

3. *CW*, 19, pp. 277–78.

1921: Presumably, a future Indian parliament will avoid the defects that he criticizes in chapter 5. There is no *substantial difference* between his concept of home rule in 1909 and parliamentary swaraj in 1921. Both refer to a state operating within the empire. However, the distinction he draws between swaraj as personal self-rule and parliamentary swaraj clarifies his general conception of swaraj.

A *substantial change* in the meaning of political swaraj occurs in 1930 with the introduction of the concept of *purna* swaraj or complete, sovereign independence. *Purna* swaraj—though still only on paper—is no longer a dominion within the empire but a sovereign state outside it—if necessary. "If swaraj was a doubtful word," Gandhi writes, "it becomes unequivocal by becoming *purna* swaraj."[4]

The idea of *purna* swaraj underlies Gandhi's famous "Declaration of Independence," a two-page document written on January 10, 1930, on behalf of the Indian National Congress. Gandhi described the document as containing a solemn pledge to work for *purna* swaraj. It was to be recited all over India on January 26, 1930. (Today, January 26 is celebrated as Republic Day—a tribute to Gandhi for having chosen January 26, 1930, to introduce the concept of *purna* swaraj). One of the principal documents of modern Indian history, it has philosophical depth as well as rhetorical flourish. Its philosophy resonates with the philosophy of the more famous American Declaration of Independence of 1776.

The preamble of Gandhi's Declaration states its political philosophy. This is followed by a statement of India's complaints about colonialism—the "fourfold disaster" as he calls it. It ends with a solemn pledge to dedicate one's life to bring about *purna* swaraj: "We therefore hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress's instructions, issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing *purna* swaraj."[5]

The political philosophy of *purna* swaraj is grounded in two liberal concepts—those of inalienable rights and government based on the

4. *CW*, 42, p. 375.

5. *CW*, 42, p. 385.

consent of the governed. "We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have opportunities for full growth. We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter or to abolish it."[6]

As for the complaints or the fourfold disaster, "The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe therefore that India must sever the British connection and attain purna swaraj or complete independence."[7]

There follows an analysis of the fourfold disaster. Economically, India is being ruined. The revenue collected is out of proportion to the people's income. There is the salt tax, "which falls heaviest on the poor." Village industries have been destroyed, the peasantry is idle for at least four months; British goods constitute the bulk of Indian imports and customs revenue from these, "which ought to have been used to lessen the burden of the taxations on the masses, is 44 times higher in India than it is in Russia, and 44 times and 24 times, respectively, less heavy than it is in the United States of America and Germany." Politically, India's status has been drastically reduced. "All administrative talent is killed." "The tallest of us have to bend before foreign authority." The people have no power to bring about reforms. Culturally, "the system of education has torn us from our moorings," and "our training has made us to hug the very chains that bind us."

But it is Gandhi's complaint against India's spiritual ruination that should catch our attention. He is not speaking of any harm done by colonialism to India's spiritual treasures. On the contrary, the apostle of nonviolence is referring to the compulsory disarmament of the Indian

6. Ibid., p. 384.

7. Ibid.

nation. India is unable to defend herself militarily. It is the statesman, not the mahatma, who is writing here: "Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly and the presence of an alien army of occupation has the effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance" and has made us think "that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign aggression."[8]

Now the concluding peroration: "We hold it to be a crime against men and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country." But the case for nonviolence is not forgotten: "We recognize, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence." Civil disobedience, withholding of taxes, and withdrawal of our support for the colonial system will end this inhuman rule.[9]

Gandhi's drafting of the Declaration contributed hugely to its fame and importance. He takes understandable pride in owning its authorship: "I was its author," he writes several years later. "I wanted the people not merely to repeat the mantra of independence but to educate the people as to its why and wherefore."[10] For him, repeating the formula of the Declaration as a ritual or mantra is not enough. Indians must grasp its "why and wherefore"—that is, its underlying political philosophy. First, they must understand why they need political swaraj: They need it because it is part of their political being and is their inalienable right to have it. Second, they must understand the origin and the ends of government. Government originates from the consent of the governed; its ends are the protection of their liberty, and the right to enjoy the fruits of their labor. If the colonial government lacked the consent of the Indian people, and if it failed to secure the ends for which government existed, Indians have the right and the duty to abolish it and to install a government that could meet those ends.

8. Ibid., p. 385.

9. Ibid.

10. *CW*, 71, p. 116.

## THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (1946–1950)

Though Gandhi did not participate in the Constituent Assembly personally, he followed the debates very closely. His presence was more urgently needed in Bengal, now being devastated by savage Hindu-Muslim riots. He was confident, however, that the Constituent Assembly was in the capable hands of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, C. Rajaji, Ragendra Prasad, Maulana Azad, B. R. Ambedkar, J. B. Kripalani, and others.[11] He was kept well informed about the ongoing debates. On December 13, 1946, Nehru introduced the key Objectives Resolution on the new constitution—unanimously passed on January 22, 1947.

The political philosophy of the Objectives Resolution was virtually an extension of the philosophy of the Declaration of Independence of 1930. It declared India to be a "sovereign republic" with well-defined territorial boundaries. The key philosophic clauses of the Resolution concerned the principles of consent, fundamental rights, and protection of the minorities: "all power and authority" of the state are derived from the people. The constitution shall guarantee and secure to all the people of India, "justice, social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality." And it shall provide adequate safeguard for "minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes."[12]

Gandhi fully endorsed the Resolution, and asked Nehru to stick to it, "whatever be the criticism advanced or opinion held by others."[13] When the fundamental rights came up for debate, he expressed his own views: "Fundamental rights can only be those rights the exercise of which is not only in the interest of the citizen but that of the whole world . . . if a man discharges his duties right from childhood and studies the sacred

11. *CW*, 86, p. 162.

12. *CW*, 86, p. 488.

13. Ibid., p. 234.

books of his faith he automatically exercises his rights too. . . . Rights cannot be divorced from duties."[14]

Gandhi coined the metaphor of "oceanic circle" to describe the India taking shape in the Constituent Assembly. The individual is the nation's basic unit: "In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose center will be the individual. . . . Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. . . . The Constituent Assembly has all the possibilities for the realization of my picture." [15] He believed the Constituent Assembly to be a "non-revolutionary" institution, and "an effective substitute for civil disobedience of the constructive type."[16] That is to say, the implementation of the new Constitution would render civil disobedience itself almost redundant. On August 15, 1947, India finally attained political swaraj. It was Gandhi's wish that political swaraj should transform itself into a *surajya*,[17] a good state—one that worked in tandem with nonviolent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as described in *Constructive Programme.*

Gandhi's assassination in January 1948 brought the Constituent Assembly's work to a temporary halt. Yet from what we know from the foregoing account, there is reason to believe that the political swaraj that he wanted was ultimately none other than a limited, constitutional, liberal republic. It is also evident that he did not advocate a highly centralized, welfare-oriented modern state. He still believed in a state that governed least—nonviolent NGOs taking their due share of work to bring about social and economic reforms. Neither have we any indication that

14. *CW*, 88, p. 230.

15. *CW*, 85, pp. 33–34. See Thomas Pantham, "Gandhi and the Constitution: Parliamentary Swaraj and Village Swaraj," in *Politics and Ethics of the Indian Constitution*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 59–78.

16. *CW*, 85, p. 7.

17. *CW*, 90, p. 24.

he was disappointed with the political swaraj that was introduced in 1947. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that he wanted the political swaraj just established to wither away. That is why it is difficult to see how anyone could suggest seriously that according to Gandhi, "the vital task" for us [Indians] today would be "to explore alternatives not just to the contemporary forms of government but to the very institution of the state."[18] How could the author of the Declaration of Independence of 1930, and the one who urged Nehru "to stick with" the state visualized in the Objectives Resolution want us to explore an alternative to the political swaraj attained in 1947?

But there is one more thing—a corollary to Gandhi's thesis on political Swaraj, namely that political swaraj can flourish in India only when civic nationalism also flourishes. For the last three centuries, the nation-state has remained the form of state in most countries. But the nature of the nation-state varies depending on the type of nationalism with which it is associated.

There were roughly three forms of nationalism in contention in India from the nineteenth century onward: religious, ethnic, and civic nationalism. In religious nationalism only the members of a given sect—whether Sunni or Shia, Catholic or Protestant, or any other—are accepted as legitimate members. In ethnic nationalism, only members of a particular race or ethnicity have legitimacy. In a civic nation every individual citizen, regardless of religion or ethnicity, is accepted as a legitimate member of the nation. Civic nationalism has an inclusive vision of the nation. It is this kind of civic nationalism that Gandhi advocates for India and its political swaraj.

Gandhi articulates his position in chapter 10 of *Hind Swaraj*. Anyone who wishes to understand Gandhi on political swaraj and its relationship to nationalism would do well to read this chapter again and again. Religious nationalism, he says plainly, will "unmake" India. This proved to be the case in 1947. If Hindus believe that India is only for Hindus, they

18. Lord Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 81.

are living in "dreamland." If Muslims believe that India should be only for Muslims, they too are living in "dreamland." In other words, both ethnic nationalism and religious nationalism are delusional. But these delusions are real and dangerous. Just as religious nationalism will unmake India, so ethnic nationalism will assassinate Gandhi and destroy all that he stands for. In other words, political swaraj of his conception dies with either religious or ethnic nationalism.

Gandhi's conception of political swaraj is safe only where religious conflicts either come to an end, or are properly managed. Similarly, political swaraj is safe only when women, Dalits, the Tribals, and religious minorities are safe. On the positive side, political swaraj should mean harmony among India's religious and ethnic populations.

In bringing about such harmony, Gandhi argued, the constructive program should have a greater role to play than should civil disobedience and satyagraha. Political swaraj is not an abstraction, it is something concrete that should be realized in the given religious, ethnic, economic, and political circumstances. The Indian civic nation for Gandhi is not an "imagined" community. Nor is the discourse on it somehow "derivative" or artificial. It is real, and created by history and human will. It is "home" and "oceanic circle" in one. Without it there is no "Indian" selfhood. There is therefore a moral duty to maintain India as a civic nation.

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELF-RULE

Self-rule, as we saw above, is the rule of the individual by the individual. The emphasis is on internal spiritual freedom. To act with such freedom the individual must be free from internal impediments, such as the undue influence of the passions. Undue influence is the influence that passions exert without due regard to the requirements of the soul and other internal faculties.

The passions of course play a necessary role in life—life will come to a standstill without them; but their role must be in harmony with the soul—the soul being the source of such values as nonviolence, justice,

honesty, sociability, and the like. A person acting only under the pressure of the passions does not and cannot act freely in Gandhi's sense of freedom. To act freely a person must remove the internal obstacles to it. Removing them requires self-discipline, that is, self-rule.

Gandhi makes his argument for self-rule within the framework of the philosophical anthropology found in Patanjali's *Yogasutra* and the *Gita*. Thus, we understand what a human being is according to that anthropology. A person is guided by the senses, the mind, the soul, and the embodied self (atman). The latter is a "part" of the supreme Atman: "Exalted are the senses, or so they say; higher than the senses is the mind; yet higher than the mind is the soul: what is beyond the soul is he [the atman]. So know him who is higher than the soul, and make firm this [self] yourself."[19]

The senses, the mind, and the soul have their respective roles to play in self-rule. The senses—the source of emotions, desires, and passions—equip humans to meet the needs of their physical and psychological existence. The soul equips them to meet the requirements of their ethical and spiritual life. The mind, standing between the senses and the soul, plays a critical role in meeting these needs. A life well lived requires the harmonious action of these internal faculties. The question is how to keep them working in that fashion. According to the *Gita* (and Gandhi), their harmony can be maintained only if the mind is self-disciplined. Disciplining the mind is a difficult thing to achieve, however, because the passions tend to be strong when not properly managed. They easily seek dominance over the mind. The *Gita* describes the matter this way: "Let a man but think of the objects of sense, attachment to them is born: from attachment springs desire, from desire is anger born. From anger comes bewilderment, from bewilderment wandering of the mind, from wandering of the mind destruction of the soul: once the soul is destroyed the man is lost" (*Gita* 2: 62–63). "Hither and thither the senses rove, and when the mind is attuned to them, it sweeps away whatever of wisdom a man may possess, as the wind sweeps away a ship on the water" (*Gita* 2: 67).

19. See R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), ch. 3, verses 42–43. All references to the *Gita* are to this text.

The mind can find balance only if it is prepared to take the directions that come from the soul. And the soul is equipped to give the right directions, because it is open to the influences stemming from the self (atman)—the ultimate source of the good, the true and the beautiful. Once again, the *Gita*: "When a man puts from him all desires that prey upon the mind, himself content in self alone, then is he called a man of steady wisdom" (*Gita* 2: 55). "But he who roves among the objects of sense, his senses subdued to self and disjoined from passion and hate, and who is self-possessed himself, draws nigh to calm serenity" (*Gita* 2: 64).

A self-disciplined person maintains equanimity in the face of joys and sorrows: He "rejoices not at whatever good befalls him nor hates the bad that comes his way" (*Gita* 2: 56–57). "The man who puts away all desires and roams around from longing freed, who does not think, 'This I am', or 'This is mine', draws near to peace" (*Gita* 2: 71). The *Gita* compares a self-ruling person to the ocean that remains calm at the bottom even though it receives waters flowing into it from turbulent rivers. Similarly, a self-ruling person manages to remain unperturbed even though passions rage around her or him (*Gita* 2: 70).

The secret of self-rule or self-discipline lies, then, in maintaining the right balance between the demands of the passions of the senses on the one hand, and the ethical and moral demands of the soul on the other. Self-rule neither requires nor seeks the suppression of the passions, for without the due enjoyment of the passions embodied life would be impossible. The proper balance between the influences of the senses and the soul can be achieved only if the mind is directed by the soul, and this happens only when the soul itself undergoes an awakening produced by the atman. A spiritual awakening, then, is the ultimate key to achieving swaraj as self-rule. In a spiritually awakened person, the mind gains sufficient strength to resist the undue influences of the passions.

It is within the context of the philosophical anthropology described above that Gandhi explains his meaning of self-rule or self-discipline. "One's rule over one's own mind is real swaraj," he writes.[20] "Control over

20. *HS*, p. 116, note 243.

the mind is alone necessary, and, when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest, and his very glance withers the enemy."[21] "As a rule, the mind, residing in a body that has become weakened by pampering, is also weak, and where there is no strength of mind, there is no strength of soul."[22] "To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves," that is, we know the atman in us.[23] However, the mind can become unstable, depending on whether the senses or the soul have the greater influence on it; for it can lean this way or that: "We notice that mind is a restless bird: the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions, the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition."[24] Steadiness of mind is possible only when the individual, with the aid of the soul, has a vision of the atman, that is, becomes truly awakened to the truth about atman and the true meaning of life. Then, and only then, can he or she have true inner freedom and self-rule. Self-rule in in this sense is self-transformative.

## SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF SELF-RULE

At this point Gandhi's argument for self-rule takes an unexpected, pivotal turn. He argues that self-rule should influence not only the inner life of the individual but also his or her public life in the nation. A truly free and self-disciplined person is concerned not only with his own or her own inner well-being, but also with the political well-being of his or her fellow citizens. Self-rule brings the awareness of one's civic and political obligations to others and to one's country. Because of this, says Gandhi,

21. Ibid., p. 92.

22. Ibid., p. 94.

23. Ibid., p. 65.

24. Ibid., pp. 65–66.

the attainment of India's political freedom is tied to the self-rule attained by each Indian: "if we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of swaraj. It is swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves."[25] Self-rule contributes directly to the welfare of the individual and indirectly to the welfare of the nation.

Gandhi is at pains to point out that self-rule is not utopian. It has a definite social orientation, insofar as it disposes the internally free person to engage in civic and political activities. Self-rule without such orientation, that is, without actual engagement with the world of politics and economics is not Gandhian self-rule. "Do not consider this swaraj to be a dream," he writes. "Here there is no idea of sitting still. The swaraj that I wish to picture before you and me is such that, after we have once realized it, we will endeavour to the end of our lifetime to persuade others to do likewise. But such swaraj has to be experienced by each one for himself. One drowning man will never save another. Slaves ourselves, it would be mere pretension to think of freeing others."[26] Only "those who have experienced the force of the soul within themselves" can legitimately invite others to join in the struggle for political swaraj.[27]

Here we have one of the deepest insights in Gandhi's entire political philosophy—the need for the experience of internal self-rule. This is equivalent to having a mini political enlightenment. Without such experience, political life becomes simply the daily struggle to get ahead or win the next election, achieve bureaucratic efficiency, attain success or fame, or leave a legacy. If there is no inner experience of self-rule, no inner drive to serve others without regard to "the fruit" of one's labor, one deprives oneself of the full promise of politics.

Gandhi does not describe in detail the experience he speaks of—for example, whether one can prepare for it, and if so, how. Looking at his own life, however, one can note several instances when Gandhi undergoes such

25. Ibid., p. 71.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 114.

an experience. One is his reading of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* and the instantaneous change in his life that it brought about. Another is his writing of *Hind Swaraj* on board *The Kildonan Castle* in the Atlantic. A third is his decision to change his bourgeois attire for the peasant loincloth—following a tour of the famine stricken areas of Bengal and Tamil Nadu. The point is that Gandhi's type of politics requires an epiphany of some sort at some point in an individuals' life, which only the individual can experience and record. Gandhi speaks of the need for it if one is to practice nonviolence as policy. Those who have "experienced the force of the soul within themselves, will not cower before brute force, and will not, on any account, desire to use brute force."[28] For Gandhi, the capacity for self-rule is a *conditio sine qua non* for attaining political swaraj. "In my opinion," concludes *Hind Swaraj*, "we have used the term swaraj without understanding its real significance. I have endeavoured to explain it as I understand it, and my conscience testifies that my life henceforth is dedicated to its attainment."[29]

The key question is, if self-rule is more than a private, personal affair, and if it has social and political dimensions, how may one attain it? He suggests two ways. The first is daily spiritual exercises, the second is the practice of certain civic virtues.

Spiritual exercises are necessary for attaining self-rule because without them the right relationship between the senses, the mind, and the soul cannot be achieved and maintained. Just as there can be no bodily health without physical exercises, so there can be no spiritual and psychological heath without spiritual exercises. The latter includes the daily examination of conscience, contemplative prayer, meditation, reading of sacred texts, listening to sacred music, keeping the company of good friends, and the like. Without the help of such exercises, the "tearing violence" of the passions can surprise even the most self-disciplined person. Here again, the *Gita* (2: 60): "And yet however much a wise man strive, the senses' tearing violence may seduce his mind by force."

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., p. 117.

What interests us here is not so much Gandhi's personal practice of spiritual exercises, as the creative role that spiritual exercises, generally understood, play in his political philosophy. Daily spiritual practices create and sustain the right conditions for the harmonious operations of the senses, the mind, and the soul. They are not specific to any particular religion: Spiritual exercises practiced in every religion or philosophic system will suffice. In Gandhi's ashrams, for example, where women also were admitted; there was room for everyone, including the nonreligious and atheists. Though Gandhi's ashrams had a spiritual atmosphere, they were nonsectarian. Their object, to take the example of the most famous of them—the Sabarmati Ashram—was plainly secular: "The object of this Ashram is that its members should qualify themselves for, and make a constant endeavor towards, the service of the country, not inconsistent with the universal welfare."[30] To attain this objective required the practice of the eleven civic virtues, already mentioned. The daily routine reveals their secular as well as spiritual character—eight hours of physical labor against one hour for prayer and common worship:

4.00 a.m.: Rising from bed
4.15 to 4.45: Morning prayer
5.00 to 6.10: Bath, exercise, study
6.10 to 6.30: Breakfast
6.30 to 7.00: Women's prayer class
7.00 to 10.30: Body labor, education and sanitation
10.45 to 11.15: Dinner
11.15 to 12.00: Rest
12.00 to 4.30 p.m.: Body labor, including classes
4.30 to 5.30: Recreation
7.00 to 7.30: Common worship
7.30 to 9.00: Recreation
9.00: Retiring bell.[31]

30. *CW*, 36, p. 398.

31. Ibid., p. 410.

Notice that only one hour is spent in prayer, whereas eight hours are spent in physical labor, indicating the importance that Gandhi attaches to economics and wealth production. Readers can judge for themselves whether the tone of Ashram life is religious or secular, given the Ashram's objective is the service of the country—and not that of religion. The place looks more like a well-run graduate school for volunteer training than a monastic house.

Of the eleven civic virtues in Gandhi's moral lexicon, three deserve our special notice. The first is the civic virtue of respect for all religions. How important this is for India, given the hostility between Hindus and Muslims, and the discrimination practiced against religious minorities, can hardly be exaggerated. So too is the virtue of fighting Untouchability. It strikes at the root of the caste system, and emphasizes that law and legislation, though necessary to remove this evil, cannot by themselves succeed without the support of civic virtues. The third virtue—control of the palate—may seem an unusual virtue to find a place in a modern treatise on moral virtues. But Gandhi thinks it important enough to include. In doing so, he reminds his readers of the damage that a lack of self-control in regard to food and drink, including drugs and alcohol, can cause to individuals and nations. By contrast, the contemporary approach to the evils associated with the abuses of food, drink, drugs, and alcohol is framed in terms of law and law-enforcement. The need for control of the palate is scarcely mentioned. Unfortunately, in liberal societies, the right of the individual trumps the duty to train oneself morally in matters relating to the consumption of food and drinks.

Thanks to the eleven civic virtues, Gandhi's concept of self-rule affects virtually every aspect of personal and national life. Self-rule is not utopia. It is hard work. And in Gandhi's political philosophy the practice of civic virtues cannot be separated from the pursuit of political swaraj.

## SELF-RULE, POSITIVE FREEDOM, AND NEGATIVE FREEDOM

Although self-rule is typically a Gandhian notion, it has certain theoretical implications for the Western concept of individual political freedom.

A comparison of individual freedom as self-rule with the modern Western notion of liberal freedom helps to highlight what is distinctive in Gandhi. The Western notion of liberalism comes from a sanitized version of Kant. Sanitized, because in order to make liberal freedom secular, God had to be removed. As Anthony Kenny writes, "For Kant, human beings are ends in themselves, but they are members of a kingdom of ends." As rational beings, humans "lay down law for themselves and for all their peers"; they are "both legislators and subjects." However, for Kant, God is a legislator "but not himself subject to law." Kant's successors dropped God, "and turned the kingdom of ends into a republic in which no legislator is privileged over any other."[32] As Isaiah Berlin similarly noted, a secularized version of Protestant individualism lies at the root of modern liberalism. God's place is taken by "the conception of the rational life," while the longing of the soul for union with God is "replaced by the individual, endowed with reason, straining to be governed by reason and reason alone."[33] No heteronomy, only autonomy.

For Gandhi, liberal liberty, detached from duty, is nothing but license. "I know that in the West there is a powerful trend towards license. But I have no desire to see students in India take to such license. . . . I want to tell you that the man who has not received education for freedom [swaraj]—and you may be sure this is not to be had by reading [J. S.] Mill on 'Liberty'—cannot be taken to be a free man."[34]

Isaiah Berlin distinguishes between positive freedom and negative freedom. He maintains that only negative freedom—freedom from external impediments—can be called *political* freedom. In this view, self-rule—freedom from internal impediments—is incompatible with political freedom because, Berlin fears, it calls for either self-abnegation or self-realization. Self-abnegation is antipolitical because it requires the suppression of all desires and complete withdrawal from the world of

32. Anthony Kenny, *The Times Literary Supplement*, January 18, 2008, p. 26.

33. Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 138.

34. *CW*, 36, p. 260; HS, p. 27.

politics—"a strategic retreat to an inner citadel," as Berlin puts it.[35] As for self-realization, if politicized it will finally lead to despotic rule and the loss of political freedom. For Berlin then, only negative freedom alone can guarantee political freedom.

Gandhi would argue that Berlin's negative freedom—freedom from external impediments, such as colonialism—represents only one aspect of swaraj. The swaraj of the individual or self-rule, according to Gandhi, should include freedom from internal impediments also. In his reckoning negative freedom and positive freedom are compatible. Gandhi would part company with Berlin when the latter argues that positive freedom would oblige the individual to withdraw from civil society or to submit to despotic rule. According to Gandhi, self-rule, far from being an obstacle to negative freedom helps preserve it. Consider the example of a religious fanatic who, for want of self-rule and the practice of the civic virtue of respect for all religions (*sarva dharma sama bhava*), incites a religious riot. Had this person habitually practiced self-rule, she or he would not have interfered with the religious freedom of others. In other words, self-rule would promote rather than diminish the success of negative freedom.

Secondly, Gandhi's self-rule does not call for self-abnegation (as Berlin supposes), but only self-restraint. Self-abnegation, as distinct from self-restraint, allows no room for the passions; ultimately it requires the extinction of all passions. Self-restraint, by contrast, does not require this; it allows the passions to play their proper role in life, as determined by the requirements of the soul and the atman. In other words, Gandhi builds self-restraint into the very structure of his concept of self-rule and the freedom that it entails. Those who enjoy internal freedom do not interfere with the political freedom of others. Indeed, a self-restrained person is less likely to interfere with the freedom of others than a self-indulgent person. Gandhi's point is that self-restraint should work in tandem with negative freedom. As for despotism, Gandhi does not see how a truly self-ruling

35. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, p. 135.

person can promote it. As he states in the passage cited earlier, those who have experienced the force of the soul within will neither submit to the violence of others nor inflict violence on others.

## CONCLUSION

We conclude this analysis of the two meanings of swaraj by observing that the compatibility of political swaraj and self-rule confirms the validity of Gandhi's theory of the ends of life. The two types of swaraj serve the same end—the political good of India and Indians. Political swaraj secures the collective freedom of the nation, and protects and promotes the rights of every individual living in the country; swaraj as self-rule helps to create a self-disciplined citizenry. A good society needs both types of swaraj.

Gandhi was aware that a nation cannot rely on the principles of internal self-rule alone. It needs the help of coercive law also. The majority of humans, as things stand, do not rule themselves; nor do they live by civic virtue. Passions, when not disciplined by virtue, must be disciplined by law. Hence the need for a coercive state based on consent.

At the same time, the state is often tempted to abuse its power or overreach itself. Hence a self-disciplined citizenry is needed in order to resist such abuses or overreach. This is exactly what satyagraha is supposed to do. The welfare state, under the guise of doing good, is often tempted to invade the domain of personal liberty. Here too self-rule can supply the necessary corrective.

Self-rule can also reduce the level of corruption in private as well as public life. If corruption is endemic to a nation, it is a sign that it has achieved only political swaraj but not self-rule. For example, if greed is not restrained by virtue, it is likely that corruption will be widespread in the nation. If virtue does not moderate the acquisitive and possessive desires, the economy is likely to encourage wasteful ways that in the long run will damage even the natural environment. Examples of this kind can easily be multiplied. The point is that the contributions that self-rule

can make toward the development of a politically healthy national life are virtually limitless. As India has learned (and as Gandhi had warned) it was easier to secure political swaraj than it was to secure swaraj as self-rule. India secured its political swaraj or national independence in 1947. The task of securing self-rule by individual Indians remains unfinished and will remain unfinished until Indians become convinced that political swaraj without self-rule is "barren." This in a nutshell is the substance of Gandhi's philosophy of swaraj.

Is Gandhi a liberal? Yes and No.[36] He is a liberal insofar as he defends the inalienable rights of the individual to be free and the equally inalienable right of nations to be independent. The famous Karachi resolution of 1931 is proof positive of his faith in liberalism. Likewise, satyagraha makes sense only when the validity of liberal freedoms is granted.

At the same time, Gandhi is not a liberal in the Western sense. Western liberalism is all autonomy and no heteronomy, because it is highly suspicious of God or anything transcendent like dharma. For Gandhi, moral autonomy without civic virtue spells moral anarchy. Gandhi will have no part of it.

36. See Ajay Skaria, "Gandhi's Politics: Liberalism and the Question of the Ashram," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101 (4), 2002, pp. 955–86; and Anthony J. Parel, "A Gandhian Liberalism?" in *Gandhi and the Contemporary World*, ed. Antony Copley and George Paxton (Chennai: Indo-British Historical Society, 1997), pp. 287–97.

# 5

# Pax Gandhiana

## *The Political Basis*

The principal foundations of Pax Gandhiana are civic nonviolence (nonviolence as policy) and a constitutionally limited state based on the consent of the governed.[1] Pax Gandhiana regards absolute nonviolence or nonviolence as creed as a purely private virtue. Gandhi's critics, failing to make a distinction between nonviolence as policy and nonviolence as creed, identify his nonviolence solely with nonviolence as creed. This in turn leads some of them to assert that his commitment to absolute nonviolence disqualifies him to be regarded as a political thinker. Such criticisms ignore the fact that in restoring politics (artha) to the status of a *purushartha*, Gandhi permits the minimum necessary use of force for the maintenance of internal order and external security.

1. This chapter is an expanded version of the Annual Gandhi Foundation Lecture, London, 2011.

What Gandhi does is to take nonviolence out of the domain of the monastery and to bring it to the agora. In doing so he gives nonviolence a new social and political direction. He makes civic nonviolence something that every citizen and statesman of good will can practice. More broadly, he makes nonviolence a way of civic life that contributes toward making society and polity less violent and more peaceful. Seen in this light, what he seeks to introduce is nothing less than a new equilibrium between civic nonviolence, the political interests of individuals and groups, the rights and freedoms of the citizen, and the coercive state. The sociopolitical order characterized by this new equilibrium is Pax Gandhiana.

Although from the very beginning of his political career in South Africa in 1893, Gandhi had an intuitive grasp of the civic nature of nonviolence, it was only in the mid-1940s that he became fully aware of its philosophical implications. In the past he had often oscillated between nonviolence as creed and nonviolence as policy. The late epiphany about the importance of civic nonviolence is not surprising, for only when a great historic movement has passed its apogee do those leading it grasp its full meaning and implications. "The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only at the dusk." So it was with Gandhi and the nonviolent political movement that he started.

As it happened, it was during the period of his last incarceration (August 9, 1942, to May 6, 1944) that Gandhi had his epiphany concerning nonviolence. "When I was in detention in the Aga Khan Palace," he writes, "I once sat down to write a thesis on India as the protagonist of nonviolence. But as I proceeded with my writing, I could not go on. I had to stop."[2] Note, he was not thinking of writing on nonviolence in the abstract; he was thinking of writing on nonviolence in the concrete, something that affects society and state—in this case, India. He was not attempting to write on monastic nonviolence, but on civic nonviolence.

Students of Gandhi's nonviolence have given little or no attention to this amazing story: the story of the prophet of nonviolence being unable

2. *CW*, 86, p. 134.

to complete his thesis on India and civic nonviolence. He now realizes that India in her present condition is far from ready for Pax Gandhiana—neither philosophically, nor socially, nor politically. This comes to him as a shock. He now sees with fresh clarity the ethical, social, and political fault lines of Indian society—the wide chasm between the profession and the practice of nonviolence, the coexistence of primitive superstitions and high philosophy, and social oppression based on religion, caste, gender, and race. As long as these fault lines remain, there is no way India can be a nonviolent country, let alone a model for others.

Limiting himself to a consideration of Hindu culture, he writes:

> There are two aspects of Hinduism. There is, on the one hand, the historical Hinduism with its untouchability, superstitious worship of stocks and stones, animal sacrifice and so on. On the other, we have the Hinduism of the *Gita*, the Upanishads and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* which is the acme of ahimsa, and oneness of all creation, pure worship of one immanent, formless imperishable God. Ahimsa which to me is the chief glory of Hinduism has been sought to be explained away by our people as being meant for sannyasis only. I do not have that view.[3]

The story of Gandhi's failure to complete his thesis on nonviolence has a valuable lesson for those interested in the study of his philosophy of civic nonviolence. The lesson is threefold. First, the nonviolence that he is interested in is civic, not monastic. What society and polity need is nonviolence as policy, not creed; the nonviolence of the citizen and the statesman, not the sannyasi. Second—and this may be surprising—to reinforce civic nonviolence, society needs the help of civic nationalism, the nationalism that is capable of unifying by mutual consent all of India's discordant elements, whether the discord is based on religion, race, language, caste, tribe, or region. National unity, in other words,

3. Ibid.

is a precondition for the success of civic nonviolence. Third, civic nonviolence requires a constitutionally limited coercive state based on the consent of the governed, one that is capable of protecting the rights of its citizens, including the Dalits, and maintaining internal order and external security. The success of civic nonviolence depends on such a state—what Gandhi calls *surajya*. Sitting in the Aga Khan Palace and reflecting on these matters, Gandhi came to the painful conclusion that India, on the eve of Independence, did not meet the preconditions necessary for Pax Gandhiana.

## CIVIC NONVIOLENCE

The monastic theory of nonviolence had de-linked the pursuit of dharma and moksha from that of artha. Gandhi now wanted to re-link them. As an active virtue, civic nonviolence perfects the society concerned and the citizens involved. It disposes its adherents not only to abstain from illegitimate acts of physical violence but also to invent peaceful techniques of resolving conflicts. Mere abstention from physical violence is not enough; the invention of new techniques of conflict resolution is equally part of the new theory as, for example, in satyagraha, whose success depends on civic nonviolence.

Here Gandhi's distinction between nonviolence as creed (also called the nonviolence of the brave) and nonviolence as policy (also called the nonviolence of the weak) is of the greatest importance. Nonviolence as creed is virtually the nonviolence of the monk who abstains from the use of legitimate violence even in self-defense. Gandhi does not suggest that the citizen and the statesman practice this form of nonviolence. For them, nonviolence as policy is sufficient. The introduction of this distinction marks an important stage in the development of Gandhi's theory of nonviolence. As a civic virtue, it permits the lawful use of violence—for example, in the defense of the rights of Dalits, the maintenance of law and order, and national self-defense through military means. Civic nonviolence in other words has a realist, not a utopian vision of life. Its goal

is not the total elimination of violence from society and polity (Gandhi regards this as impossible to achieve), but rather the reduction of its intensity and extent. In Gandhi's realistic political world, civic nonviolence and the coercive state coexist.

The ethic of civic nonviolence draws on three principal sources. First it draws on soul force, especially in the form of love-force or sociability. The "other" is a friend, not a foe. Hobbes and his followers are not Gandhi's source here. Second, it draws on the idea of citizenship and public service. The "public" stands for humanity. When you exercise citizenship and public service you see in the other not the member of this or that caste, race, sect, or tribe but a member of humanity. The idea of the "public" enables one to overcome prejudices against others based on race, religion, or caste.

Third, civic nonviolence draws on the ethic of *anasakti* yoga or self-less service. This is the basic teaching of the *Gita* adapted to the capacities of ordinary people—regardless of their sectarian affiliation. Interpreted broadly, it teaches a realist view of life, one that requires an active engagement in the world of politics, economics, and social reform. Such engagement can lead citizens not only to a more peaceful social order but also to a better state of moral and spiritual self-fulfillment.

According to this ethic, action must meet the following four basic conditions. First, it has to be good in itself, that is, good according to the ethical standards of one's own profession and life-circumstances. Second, the benefit that accrues to oneself from action should not harm others; indeed it should in some way contribute to the welfare of others as well. Third, the intention of the acting agent should be ethically pure, that is, free from the desire to make undue personal gain—the focus being on one's sense of duty and on meeting the requirements of the task at hand. Finally, the means used should be ethically sound.

Gandhi firmly believes that action that meets the above conditions would ipso facto be nonviolent. There is nothing more an agent has to do in order to practice civic nonviolence. In other words, he simplifies the way nonviolence can be practiced. There is no need to disengage from the day-to-day activities in the fields of economics, politics, and social

reform; no need to repair to an ashram; no need to wear a special religious garb, or belong to a particular sect or religion. One can act nonviolently whatever one's religion, or one's station in life. Nonviolence is no longer an elite virtue.

As we saw in chapter 2, Gokhale was Gandhi's model of a person who practiced public service and civic nonviolence. To this list we can add the example of M. C. Chagla (1900–1981). A renowned Indian Muslim diplomat and statesman, he wrote in his autobiography that he "never empathized with the sannyasi ideal. . . . The better and more satisfying philosophy is the one that the *Bhagavad-Gita* teaches—the philosophy of non-attachment. One must not give up anything, one must do one's duty in whatever stations of life one is placed; and having done one's duty one must remain indifferent to the results. The doing of the duty is in one's own hand—the achievement of results one must leave to Providence or whatever power it may be that guides our destinies."[4] A better illustration of the nonsectarian character of the ethics of the *Gita* can hardly be found.

In bringing nonviolence out of the monastery, is Gandhi "spiritualizing" civic life, as the process is sometimes called? Gandhi's conceptual framework helps to answer this question. What he does is to bring dharma into contact with the requirements of artha, and vice versa. "Spiritualizing" does not mean replacing artha with dharma and the pursuit of moksha. It means bringing all three *purusharthas* in a working relationship with one another. Yes, he wants certain ethical values, *common to all religions*, to influence civic behavior. Gandhi does not do what Machiavelli, Hobbes, and their followers did to civic life in the West: empty it of its spiritual content, secularize it radically, and isolate it from ethics and spirituality. In Gandhi's view, Pax Gandhiana adapts nonviolence to the needs of civic life in a pluralistic society without committing the error of exalting the artha above all the other *purusharthas*.

4. M. C. Chagla, *Roses in December: An Autobiography* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1990), p. 475.

## CIVIC NONVIOLENCE AND CIVIC NATIONALISM

Civic nonviolence needs the support of not only a new theory of nonviolence but also of a new theory of an inclusive Indian nationalism. An inclusive civic nationalism is a precondition of a nonviolent society and ultimately of Pax Gandhiana. "A society based on nonviolence cannot be built," writes Gandhi, "except with the free and willing consent of all its components parts."[5] A divided nation, whether the division is based on religion or race, will inevitably be drawn into civil strife of one kind or another. India had been plagued by internal conflicts arising chiefly from religious or caste differences. Civic nonviolence can put an end to such conflicts if, and only if, it develops an inclusive civic nationalism.

What then is civic nationalism? It is an open nationalism, as distinct from the closed nationalism based on religion or ethnicity, such as we find in the nationalism of M. A. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and the ethnic nationalism of V. D. Savarkar, the father of the Hindutva ideology.

What distinguishes these nationalisms is their concept of what constitutes their basic unit. In Muslims religious nationalism, for example, only a member of the Muslim religion qualifies as its basic national unit. It excludes a pluralistic concept of the nation. Similarly, in Savarkar's ethnic nationalism only those who possess the quality of Hindutva (Hinduness) can constitute the nation. Muslims and Christians are automatically excluded.

The basic unit of a civic nation, by contrast, is the individual citizen regarded as a bearer of inalienable rights and as a subject capable of swaraj or self-rule, self-determination, and self-development. Three sets of ideas hold such citizens together as a civic nation. First, there is a shared sense of history: its triumphs and tragedies, its achievements in the arts, the sciences, and technology. Second, there is a shared sense of human rights and a willingness to share with one another the material benefits of living in an inclusive civic nation. Third, there is a commonly held humanism

5. *CW*, 78, p. 56.

that disposes one to embrace one's fellow citizens simply because they are human beings, regardless of religious, racial, economic, or some other differences. What distinguishes civic nationalism from religious or ethnic nationalism is its pluralistic, inclusive character. There is no test for membership based on religion, ethnicity, caste, language, race, or region. It is this form of nationalism that Gandhi adopts for himself and believes is most suitable for a nonviolent India. India for him is neither "nations" nor "peoples" but a great nation.[6]

Gandhi contributed to the development of civic nationalism in India in two major ways: by coining an Indian term for "nation," and by making the Indian National Congress its chief vehicle.

The word for "nation" that Gandhi uses consistently in *Hind Swaraj* (1909) is *praja* and its variant *ek-praja* (one nation). In monarchical India, *praja* was a civic term signifying the subjects of a rajah. It was a secular term in the sense that that it stood for the rights and privileges of the subjects of a rajah, regardless of religious differences. A rajah could have as his subjects Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Jains, Sikhs, Parsees, and others—they were all equally his subjects. Gandhi adapts this term to designate members of the Indian nation that he constructs in *Hind Swaraj*.

India for him is a multireligious nation, yet it can also be a civic nation because Indian culture has a capacity for assimilation or *samas*. Just as Indian languages can create new words out of existing words, so the Indian nation can create a civic nation out of people who profess different religions. India does not thereby cease to be one nation, he insists: "The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation, they merge in it."[7] Those who are "conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion. If they do, they are not fit to be considered a nation. . . . The Hindus, the Mahomedans, the Parsees and the Christians who have made India their country are fellow countrymen. . . .

6. *CW*, 76, p. 187.

7. *HS*, p. 50.

In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms: nor has it ever been so in India."[8]

In the Indian National Congress Gandhi found a convenient organizational tool with which to build the civic nation. One of its main tasks was to bring together people of different religions: "I can see my way of rebuilding the Congress," he once remarked, "with five true men with whom there is neither Hindu nor Muslim nor any other. Religion is a personal matter. It ought not to affect the political field."[9]

This cry of the heart expresses two things. First, that a precondition for building a civic nation is the ability to overcome religious prejudice. Second, that it takes a high degree of civic virtue, especially the virtue of equal respect for all religions, to build such a nation. One can detect a sense of desperation in Gandhi's wish to find "five true" Indians who have overcome religious prejudice.

Gandhi believes that apart from the virtue of equal respect for all religions, civic friendship is also needed to build a civic nation. He begins his last theoretical treatise, *Constructive Programme*, with a call for civic friendship. The civic friendship that he speaks of has its root in the deep ethic common to all religions—in the dharma that underlies all dharmas.[10]

Gandhi's friendship with C. F. Andrews (1871–1940) was based on such an ethic. Andrews, an Anglican missionary and educationalist long settled in India, became his very close civic friend. They were divided not only by religion but also by race. Yet in the civic sphere they were able to become the best of friends precisely because their civic friendship was nourished by the deep ethic underlying their respective religions. Presumably, Andrews lived by the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount and Gandhi by that of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. They distinguished between deep ethic and subtle theology such that they were able to overcome any religious prejudice while maintaining their faith in their respective religions.

8. Ibid.

9. *CW*, 74, p. 27.

10. *HS*, p. 41.

Gandhi believed that an inner *experience* of the ethic of universal dharma would enable people to overcome religious prejudice. Once again we see Gandhi stressing the need to experience the ethic you actually practice. Mere notional understanding of ethics is not enough.

There is no need to rehearse here the extent to which ethnic nationalism and religious nationalism have gone, and continue to go, to provoke communal conflicts in India. Suffice to say that that the ethnic nationalism of Hindutva inspired Nathuram Godse (1910–1949), Gandhi's assassin. Godse believed that as a Hindutva nationalist, he was justified in killing those who threatened the Hindu nation. He told this to the court that sent him to the gallows: "I firmly believed that the teachings of absolute ahimsa as advocated by Gandhiji would ultimately result in the emasculation of the Hindu community and thus make the community incapable of resisting the aggression or inroads of other communities, especially the Muslims."[11]

Likewise, religious nationalism led Jinnah to assert that there was an irreconcilable national antipathy between Muslims and Hindus, and therefore that India had to be partitioned. "To yoke together two such nations under a single state," he stated in his famous Lahore speech of 1940, "must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be built up for the government of such a state."[12] The vigor of the religious nationalism that Jinnah promoted did not end with the partition of India. It has morphed into the virulent jihadi form of Islam that today threatens peace and stability in the whole of South Asia, if not the rest of the world.

The lesson that we should learn from Gandhi's theory of civic nationalism is that both ethnic nationalism and religious nationalism are violent and divisive. Only civic nationalism has the moral resources to reduce the extent and the intensity of social conflict, and create Pax Gandhiana.

11. James W. Douglas, *Gandhi and the Unspeakable: His Final Experiment with Truth* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012), p. 105.

12. Cited in C. H. Philips, ed., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858–1947* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 354.

## CIVIC NONVIOLENCE AND THE COERCIVE STATE

Paradoxical as it may seem, Gandhi holds that civic nonviolence can become a way of civic life only with the help of the coercive state. We can trace this view back to his understanding of human nature. Humans are body-soul composites. Though endowed with a spiritual soul, they are capable of violence. "All life in the flesh exists by some *himsa* (violence). . . . The world is bound by a chain of destruction. In other words, *himsa* is an inherent necessity for life in the body. . . . None, while in the flesh, can thus be entirely free from *himsa* because one never completely renounces the will to live."[13] "No doubt, destruction in some form or other of some life is inevitable. Life lives upon life."[14] This being the case, only the good state, endowed with adequate coercive power, can ensure internal order and external security.

There is a debate in the literature on Gandhi, as to whether the state should have a place in his political philosophy at all. It is very easy to cite passages that suggest that it does not. Gandhi did not write on the state in any systematic way. This is where, as I argue in chapter 2, his conceptual framework becomes very helpful. The passages that appear to question the legitimacy of the state should be interpreted in the light of his conceptual framework. Artha has an honorable place in his system of ends of life, and the state belongs to the sphere of artha.

However, as noted earlier, Gandhi's defense of the need for the state was refined over a period of time, from 1909 to 1947. In 1909 in *Hind Swaraj*, home rule meant a state that functioned within the empire. In 1921 it meant a form of parliamentary swaraj according to the wishes of the Indian people that also functioned within the empire.[15] In 1930 it meant *purna swaraj*, a sovereign state within the empire if possible or outside it if necessary.[16] Finally, in 1947, it meant a *surajya*, a good state—one

13. *CW*, 37, p. 314.

14. *CW*, 34, p. 130.

15. *CW*, 19, p. 278.

16. *CW*, 45, pp. 263–64.

that operated in collaboration with a multitude of nonviolent NGOs, as envisaged in *Constructive Programme.* [17]

To clarify the nature of the role that nonviolence should play in the state, Gandhi introduced a set of important distinctions called the "fields of nonviolence."[18] By "field" he meant "community." Nonviolence operated differently in different communities. He identified four forms of community: the family, the religious community, the nation-state, and the international community of states. Nonviolence works differently in each of these. What works in one might not work in another.

Thus in the family, nonviolence operates in the form of reciprocal love between husband and wife, parents and children. In the religious community also, nonviolence operates in the form of love, as manifested in interfaith voluntary associations that seek to foster harmony between religious communities. In the nation-state, however, nonviolence works in the form of civic nonviolence—with the aid of a minimum of coercive violence permitted by law and the constitution. That said, the nation-state could reduce violence to a minimum if, and only if, the vast majority of the people in the state were habitually inclined to behave nonviolently.[19] I call this Gandhi's "vast majority principle." The practice of the appropriate civic virtues is of critical importance here. So also is the proper distribution of wealth. The more equal a society, the less violent it is likely to be. That Gandhi went to the extent of making these distinctions based on the concept of "field" shows how deeply committed he was to the coexistence of the coercive state and civic nonviolence.

In the international community of sovereign states, nonviolence operates in and through international law, diplomacy, treaties and conventions, and international organizations. Gandhi saw the international community as being composed of "not absolutely independent states

17. *CW*, 90, pp. 24, 295.

18. *CW*, 72, pp. 248–50, 271–72, 281–82.

19. *CW*, 71, p. 407.

warring one against another but a federation of friendly interdependent states."[20]

What Gandhi rejects is not the state as such but the Machiavellian type of state that puts reason of state or "national interest" (*prajano swarth*)[21] above the interests of the international community. That Gandhi rejects the fascist and totalitarian states goes without saying. He also regarded the ever-expanding modern welfare state with deep suspicion. In the name of serving the people, the welfare state ended up being the "*ma-bap*" or a paternalistic-maternalistic state. The Gandhian state has the obligation to consider the individual the most important unit of society, and to seek national interest only within the bounds of the norms of *sadharan* (universal) dharma—truthfulness, uprightness, freedom from malice, compassion, forbearance, and abstention from causing injury to other states.

## CIVIC NONVIOLENCE AND JUST WAR

Gandhi's acceptance of the coercive state has implications for his stand on war in general, and just war in particular. Here too his ideas underwent a gradual evolution. He participated in the Boer War of 1899 as a member of the Indian ambulance corps that he had organized. In 1906, he participated in the Zulu Rebellion in a similar way. What motivated him was not the ideology of imperial wars, which he abhorred, but partly the interests of the immigrant Indian community in South Africa, and partly his sense of duty as a loyal citizen of the empire.

During World War I, Gandhi encouraged Indians to join the Indian army. He wrote two significant bulletins, in which he argued that joining the Indian army was morally and pragmatically justified. In Bulletin I, the argument was that India, as part of the empire, had an obligation to help Great Britain. Home rule implied, he said, "maintenance of connection

20. *CW*, 25, p. 482.

21. *HS*, pp. 84–85.

with the Empire as one of its partners." It was true that India did not enjoy home rule. But "In order to acquire this status we must gain power to defend ourselves and for that to arm ourselves and fight. . . . We must therefore learn to bear arms and gain power to protect ourselves from any aggression. It is, therefore, our duty to join the army if we want to learn that art very quickly."[22]

By disarming the Indian people, Gandhi continued, Great Britain had deprived Indians of their capacity for self-defense through military means. "The easiest and the straightest way, therefore, of winning swaraj was to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Britishers in the defense of the Empire." In helping the empire by joining the army, "we gain fitness for swaraj, learn how to defend our country and to recover to some extent our lost manliness."[23]

Bulletin 2 examined the negative impact of passive nonviolence on precolonial Indian politics. It made Indians incapable of maintaining internal order, let alone external security. "My experience reveals one great weakness of the elite," he wrote. "In the name of dharma we have put on the shelf our karma [duty]. . . . These 'philosophers' remain passive and indifferent witnesses if the neighbors' house is burnt, if he is dishonored and disgraced, or if he is robbed of his property. So long as this pseudo-philosophy is not uprooted from the Indian soil, there is not going to be any real peace in the country."[24]

No state, the bulletin continued, can exist in peace with other states unless it is capable of defending itself militarily. It was the inability of India to defend itself militarily that had led to colonial rule in the first place. If India wants to attain political swaraj, it must acquire the ability to defend itself. Participating in a just war such as World War I was one way of acquiring that ability.

22. Mahadev Desai, *Day to Day with Gandhi*, vol. 1 (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968), pp. 349–52.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., pp. 355–57.

C. F. Andrews, among others, took Gandhi to task for writing the two bulletins. "How could you, a votary of nonviolence, exhort others to take up arms and join the war?" asks Andrews. Gandhi's reply contains not only a defense of his position but also one of the finest expositions of the damaging effects of passive nonviolence. The fundamental defect of passive nonviolence is its inability to harmonize the pursuits of artha, dharma, and moksha. His philosophy of civic nonviolence, by contrast, attempts to restore the lost harmony. India's ability to defend itself

> won't come until there is an atmosphere of freedom and fearlessness on the soil. How to produce that atmosphere? . . . Now I think I can state my difficulty. It is clear that before I can give a child an idea of Moksha, I must let it grow into full manhood. . . . I am absolutely right, as things are, in calling upon every Indian to join the army, always telling him at the same time that he needs doing so not for the lust of blood, but for the sake of learning not to fear death.[25]

"So it comes to this that under exceptional circumstances war may have to be resorted to as a necessary evil, even as the body is. If the motive is right, it may be turned to the profit of mankind, and that an *Ahimsaist* [a practitioner of nonviolence] may not stand aside and look on with indifference, but must make the choice and actively co-operate or actively resist."[26]

In a letter of July 25, 1918, to Maganlal Gandhi, Gandhi went one step further. He names two revered teachers of passive nonviolence specifically for criticism—Swaminarayan (1781–1830) and Vallabhacharya (1479–1531). What cut him to the quick was the perception that the teachings of Swaminarayan and Vallabhacharya have made Indians completely unmanly. They deprived them of their power of self-defense. The love they taught was nothing more than pure sentimentality.

25. Ibid., pp. 175–76.

26. Ibid., p. 177.

> True love cannot grow out of it. They had not even an inkling of the true spirit of ahimsa. Ahimsa is the stabilization of the fleeting urges of the mind. Ahimsa has to be practiced primarily in the relationship of one man with another, but there is not even a scent of this chief characteristic of ahimsa in the writings of these two religious leaders. They were born during the dark periods of our history and they could not overcome the limitations of their environment. Their influence has spread most widely in Gujarat.[27]

By 1930 Gandhi had completely lost his faith in the empire. He came to the firm conclusion that India could enjoy swaraj only if it had the capacity for national self-defense by military means. He expressed this view very forcefully at the Second Round Table Conference (London, 1931), the only conference of its kind debating a constitution for India that Gandhi ever attended. Speaking as a statesman, that is, the representative of the Indian National Congress, the importance of what he had to say is very significant:

> I think that a nation that has no control over her own defense forces and over her external policy is hardly a responsible nation. Defense, its Army, is to a nation the very essence of its existence, and if a nation is controlled by an outside agency, no matter how friendly it is, then that nation is certainly not responsibly governed. . . . Hence I am here very respectfully to claim complete control over the Army, over the Defense forces and over External Affairs.

He came to his position, he said, "with the greatest deliberation." To have an Indian state with complete control over defense was his dream. "It is the dream I should like to cherish up to the end of my time." "I refuse to deceive myself that I am going to embark upon responsible government

27. Ibid., p. 198.

although I cannot control my Defense.... That is my fundamental position."[28]

Nearly a year before the start of World War II, in November 1938 Gandhi saw the legitimacy of a just war against Nazi Germany. "If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified. But I do not believe in any war."[29] The same logic seemed to have been at work when he tacitly approved of India defending itself militarily against the Pakistani attack on Kashmir in 1947.[30]

The horrors of World War II, including the Holocaust and the use of nuclear weapons, made Gandhi rethink his stand on self-defense by military means. He began to put less and less emphasis on the military means of self-defense and more and more on *Shanti Sena* (Peace Brigade) and national civil self-defense through nonviolent means, reinforced by gradual universal disarmament.

At the same time he remained convinced that a government cannot succeed in becoming "entirely nonviolent," precisely because it represents all people—peaceful as well as violent citizens. All he could hope for was "a predominantly nonviolent society." The government of such a society "will use the least amount of force. But no government worth its name can suffer anarchy to prevail . . . a small police force will be necessary."[31]

## CONCLUSION

What Pax Gandhiana aims at is not the total elimination of violence, personal and collective, but the proper management of violence and its gradual reduction. Gandhi as a political thinker is pragmatic in his approach,

28. *CW*, 48, pp. 303–10.

29. *CW*, 68, p. 138.

30. *CW*, 90, p. 512.

31. *CW*, 71, p. 226.

sometimes professing nonviolence as a personal creed and at other times professing it as policy. As a political thinker, and as the inventor of satyagraha, he defends civic nonviolence. Of his closest allies only Vinoba Bhave embraced nonviolence as creed. All the others including Nehru, Azad, Patel, and Rajaji defended nonviolence only as policy—the latter going to the extent of correcting the errors of "the Newton of nonviolence."[32] Holding a personal opposition to war while taking a pragmatic approach to it as a political thinker is not unusual with political thinkers.

Pax Gandhiana is no utopia. If political conditions are right it can be realized. Gandhi's political philosophy explains what those conditions are and how they may be created. At the most abstract level, they can be created if artha works in concert with the other ends of life. At the day-to-day concrete level, they can be created, depending on the initiatives taken by individuals, voluntary agencies, institutions, and the coercive state.

32. *CW*, 76, p. 462.

6

# Pax Gandhiana

## *The Economic Basis*

In the previous chapter we examined the political requirements of Pax Gandhiana. In this essay we turn to examining its economic and structural requirements.[1] Political swaraj meant little to Gandhi if it was not accompanied by economic swaraj. Economic swaraj means a just economic order that is capable of satisfying the material needs of citizens under conditions of human dignity, liberty, and equality. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi takes "as understood that anything that helped India to get rid of the grinding poverty of the masses would in the same process also establish swaraj."[2]

Gandhi's economic awakening preceded his political awakening. His reading of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* in 1904 led to what he called an

1. This chapter is an expanded version of the Inaugural M. K. Gandhi Lecture, College of Humanities, Carleton University, Ottawa, 2012.

2. *CW*, 39, p. 389.

"instantaneous" change in his life and outlook. He came under the "magic spell" of this book, so much that he paraphrased and published it in 1908 under the title *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all). Ruskin's title *Unto This Last* was taken from the parable of the workers in the vineyard (chapter 20 of the Gospel of St. Matthew). In the parable workers come to work at different hours of the day. At the end of the day even the worker who came last and worked for only an hour, is given a living wage, like the others. The moral of the parable is that everyone who works deserve a living wage—even those who, through no fault of their own, come to work at the last hour.

Gandhi found it impossible to translate Ruskin's original title into intelligible Gujarati, so he invented a new term for it, *Sarvodaya*: "We do not even explain what the title of the book means, for it can be understood only by a person who has read the Bible in English. But since the object which the book works towards is the welfare of all—that is, the advancement of all and not merely of the greatest number—we have entitled these articles *Sarvodaya*."[3] It does not take much imagination to realize that his aim in *Sarvodaya*, like Ruskin's in *Unto This Last*, is to establish that a living wage is a matter of economic justice. As Gandhi sees it, this requires a criticism of the prevailing economic theories. *Sarvodaya* is his economic manifesto, just as *Hind Swaraj* is his political manifesto.

By the turn of the twentieth century, certain economic ideas had penetrated Gandhi's political mind. Half of the twenty books listed Appendix I of *Hind Swaraj* are on economics. They included, among others, R. C. Dutt's two-volume *Economic History of India*, and Dadabhai Naoroji's *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*—both critiques of the economic policies of the colonial government.

It is evident that Gandhi was not at all happy with the pathologies of capitalism as it operated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Great Britain, the United States, and colonial India. It did not mean,

3. *CW*, 8, p. 241.

however, that he was promoting socialism as an alternative. He personally knew some of the early Indian Marxists, such as Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. "Socialism and communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours," he wrote. "One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it, for I know the essential difference between man and brute is that the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him and can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute and therefore superior to selfishness and violence which belongs to brute force and not to the immortal spirit of man."[4] The goal of his economic philosophy is rather limited: to cure some of the pathologies of capitalism along the lines outlined in *Unto This Last*, Thoreau's *Life without Principle*, and Tolstoy's *The Slavery of Our Times*.

If Ruskin and others stimulated Gandhi intellectually, it was the plight of India's poor masses that moved him emotionally. Corresponding to the intellectual change brought about by reading Ruskin in 1904 was the emotional change that occurred in 1921, brought about by the plight of the famine-stricken poor people of India. It moved him so deeply that he decided to identify himself with them in every way possible. The donning of the famous loincloth was the outward expression of the internal change. He instantly decided to divest himself of bourgeois attire—the dhoti, the kurta, the Gandhi-cap, and the sandals—in favor of the peasant's loincloth. The loincloth has come to symbolize Gandhi almost in the same way as the contemplative sitting pose has come to symbolize the Buddha. Above all, the loincloth symbolizes the will to do practical things here and now in order to improve the living conditions of India's poor. For Gandhi economics is not only a matter of theoretical knowledge; it is something that moves him emotionally.

The immediate background to donning the loincloth was Gandhi's tour in 1921 of the famine-stricken areas of Bengal and the Madras presidency.

4. *CW*, 58, p. 248.

What he witnessed so moved him that he could not sleep for nights. It was painful for him, he said, to eat or to dress as long as the poor did not have enough to eat or to cover their bodies. He felt that it was one's duty to dress them first and then to dress oneself, to feed them first and then to feed oneself.[5] "What effective answer could I give them, if it was not to divest myself of any inch of clothing I decently could and thus to a greater extent bring myself in line with the ill-clad masses?" he asked himself.[6] The point is that his economic philosophy, like his political philosophy, is intensely action oriented.

Gandhi's writings on economic issues, spread over a period of fifty years, cover a vast array of topics. For our purposes here we limit ourselves to the following: the motivations at work in economic activities, a critical definition of wealth, private property and its relationship to the principle of trusteeship, and the duty of labor, including manual labor. His awareness of the need for introducing structural changes through the agency of the state will also be briefly discussed.

## MOTIVATIONS AT WORK

Ruskin's treatment of the question of the motivations at work in economic activities received Gandhi's very close attention because in his view modern political economy reduced all motivations to just one—the profit motive driven by enlightened self-interest. Modern political economy made economics a science on the model of the natural sciences. It sought to discover the constant in economic activities, and found it in the profit motive driven by enlightened self-interest. Other motives that might be involved in economic activities, such as social affection and benevolence, were dismissed as being episodic and unreliable for scientific

5. *CW*, 24, pp. 456–57.

6. *CW*, 46, p. 55.

purposes. Ethical and spiritual considerations had no place in the scientific study of economics.

To bolster the scientific character of economics, political economists invented "the economic man" (*homo economicus*)—an artificial construct of their imagination. To use Gandhi's dismissive metaphor in *Sarvodaya*, they regarded "man merely as a money-making machine."[7]

Gandhi rejected this narrow view of human nature because he had, thanks to his theory of the canonical ends of life, a broader view of the same. Humans are not "money-making machines" but bodily beings endowed with a spiritual soul. As such, they are by nature capable of pursuing both material and spiritual ends. The supposition that they were interested only in the pursuit of artha gives a distorted view of human nature and human motivations. Social affection and benevolence are as constant a motive in certain types of economic activities as self-interest and profit-making are in certain others. Political economy therefore is seriously mistaken in asserting that from the point of view of the new science of economics, humans are motivated only by self-interest. How can such a science apply to a human being, asks Gandhi, in whom "the soul is the predominant element?" Social affection and benevolence, arising from soul force, can enter into all the calculations of the economist and falsify them. The best work is done, Gandhi argues, not under pressure of the profit motive but when the soul force is brought to its greatest strength by its own proper fuel: benevolence. Humans will give their best only when their affections also are brought into play[8].

A free and just society therefore is one that allows room for the operations of two types of motivations, one based on benevolence and the other on self-interest. But this conception is possible only if economists were prepared to go beyond such artificial constructs as "the economic man" and abandon the notion that economics is an exact science like the natural sciences. Gandhi, in other words, visualizes two parallel economic

7. *CW*, 8, p. 241.

8. Ibid., pp. 257–59.

systems operating side by side, one motivated by the pursuit of legitimate profit and the other by benevolence and the principle of cooperation.

The not-for-profit sector of the economy, drawing on benevolence, is vast and capable of holding its own. The medical and the legal professions are good examples of this; so are the teaching profession, the religious ministry, the military, the police, firefighters and the like. The cooperative movement (for example, the Amul Milk Co-operative Society pioneered by Verghese Kurien, in Gandhi's own Gujarat) now found in virtually all parts of India, draws on benevolence and the principle of cooperation. However, Gandhi was afraid that the profit motive was beginning to corrupt some of these professions and organizations. His scathing criticism of doctors and lawyers in chapters 11 and 12 in *Hind Swaraj* was inspired by that concern.

In the Gandhian context, the economics of khadi is undoubtedly the best example of an economy driven by benevolence and mutual benefit. In the first half of the twentieth century khadi had become an integral part of the nationalist movement, valued as much for its symbolism as for its financial worth. As a symbol it signified the national will to mobilize indigenous productive forces. As part of the nationalist economy, it put into sharp relief the difference between an economy driven by the profit motive and one driven by benevolence.

Gandhi believed that khadi was every bit a business enterprise as any other, and that there was also a "science of khadi." But it worked "on diametrically opposite lines" to that of ordinary business, as defined in the economics of Adam Smith, who supposed that there was only one science of economics—that based on the profit motive.

> You know how Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*, after laying down certain principles according to which economic phenomena are governed, went on to describe certain other things which constituted the "disturbing factor" and prevented economic laws from having free play. Chief among these was the "human element". Now it is this "human element" on which the entire economics of khadi rests; and human selfishness, Adam Smith's "pure economic

> motive", constitutes the "disturbing factor" that has got to be overcome. What applies to the production of mill-cloth, therefore, does not apply to khaddar.

The principle of "highest profit and lowest wages" has no place in khadi business; "there is no such thing as pure profit in khadi. And there should be no loss. . . . In khadi, the prices realized return to the prime producer, the spinners, and others getting no more than their hire."[9]

Gandhi elaborates further on the nature of the difference between khadi as a business enterprise and "the commonly prevalent economics": They are "poles asunder." Khadi organizations "are not merely economic organizations; they are benevolent institutions too. Their aim is not to serve anybody's selfish interests but to promote public welfare;" to attain "not merely *preya* [material welfare] but *sreya* [spiritual welfare] for the people."[10] This prompts him to make another critique of Adam Smith:

> I am always reminded of one thing which the well-known British economist Adam Smith has said in his famous treatise *The Wealth of Nations*. In it he has described some economic laws as universal and absolute. Then he has described certain situations which may be an obstacle to the operation of these laws. These disturbing factors are the human nature, the human temperament or altruism inherent in it. Now, the economics of khadi is just the opposite of it. Benevolence which is inherent in human nature is the very foundation of the economics of khadi. What Adam Smith has described as pure economic activity based merely on the calculations of profit and loss is a selfish attitude and it is an obstacle to the development of khadi; and it is the function of a champion of khadi to counteract this tendency.[11]

9. *CW*, 58, p. 353–54.

10. *CW*, 59, p. 205.

11. *CW*, 59, pp. 205–206.

These comments do not imply that the profit motive is in itself illegitimate. How could someone who considers artha to be a *purushartha* object to legitimate profit making? It is legitimate. At the same time, Gandhi wants to make room for an economic system based on benevolence. He is not suggesting that it should replace an economic system based on the profit motive. What he suggests is that these two economic systems should operate side by side. Society as a whole would benefit if they did so. This is consistent with the theory that in economic matters artha should work in tandem with dharma.

## WEALTH REDEFINED

Wealth, being a part of artha, is a necessary condition for the flourishing of Pax Gandhiana. But its definition in modern political economic terms made it very difficult for Gandhi to accept without modification. Ruskin had already drawn Gandhi's attention to this issue. Other sources, such as the Upanishads and the New Testament, further convinced him of the inadequacy of the current definition.

The main object of *Unto This Last* was to give "an accurate and stable definition of wealth."[12] John Stuart Mill in *The Principles of Political Economy* had defined wealth as consisting of "all useful and agreeable objects which possess exchangeable value." Usefulness and agreeableness were thought "to exist in the thing before we can esteem it an object of wealth."[13]

Ruskin disagreed with Mill, arguing that every material utility depends on its "relative human capacity." Thus a horse is useful only to those who can ride it or have the capacity to use it for some other purpose. Similarly, the agreeableness of a thing depends on its "relatively human disposition." Whether one will consume milk or cocaine depended on one's moral and

12. John Ruskin, *Unto This Last and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 162.

13. Ibid., p. 206.

psychological disposition. In the light of these reflections Ruskin gives his own definition of wealth and political economy: "political economy, being a science of wealth, must be a science respecting human capacities and dispositions."[14] That is to say, the definition of wealth merely in terms of possessions of exchangeable value is inadequate: Human capacities and human dispositions must also be taken into account.

The introduction of the notions of human capacities and human dispositions shifts the focus of attention from wealth as possessions to wealth as persons—persons who possess and use wealth in an ethical way. In this way, ethics enters into the very definition of wealth. A person-centered concept emerges side by side with a possession-centered one, prompting Ruskin to state that "the persons themselves are the wealth."[15] The "real science of political economy . . . is that which teaches nations to desire and labor for the things that lead to life, and which teaches them to scorn and destroy the things that lead to destruction."[16] To be wealthy, then, it is not enough to have possessions of exchangeable value; it is even more necessary to have relative human capacities and dispositions. If wealth has a primary end, it is to serve as a means to life, which leads Ruskin to coin his famous dictum, "There is no wealth but life."[17] The wealth of a nation consists more in persons who enjoy a good quality of life both materially and ethically than in the possessions of exchangeable value that they own. "That country is richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings"; and that man is richest who, having acquired his wealth with the help of requisite capacities and dispositions will help others to do the same.[18]

One of the lasting lessons that Gandhi learns from Ruskin is that the enjoyment of wealth depends on certain moral capacities and spiritual

14. Ibid., p. 207.

15. Ibid., 189.

16. Ibid., p. 209.

17. Ibid., p. 222.

18. Ibid.

dispositions. To his great delight he found support for this modern idea in the ancient teachings of the Upanishads. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, for example identifies self-restraint (*damyata*), generous giving (*datta*), and compassion (*dayadhvam)*—made famous by T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land*—as necessary for the proper enjoyment of life. But it was *Ishopanishad* that catches his special attention. Its first verse, he believes, contains the essence of classical Indian philosophy's moral teaching on wealth:

> By the Lord (*isa*) enveloped must this all be—
> Whatever moving thing there is in the moving world.
> With this renounced, thou mayest enjoy.
> Covet not the wealth of anyone at all.[19]

Two moral teachings arise from this verse. First, covetousness is forbidden. Second, one may enjoy wealth only on the condition that one renounces any pretended absolute sovereignty over the things of this world. Absolute sovereignty over worldly things belongs to the Lord (*isa*) alone. Humans have only relative sovereignty over material things, and that too, is limited to the things that they actually require to live. "With this renounced, thou mayest enjoy" is the celebrated counsel. Thus, the renunciation of *absolute ownership* (which belongs only to the Lord) should accompany the enjoyment of material wealth. Gandhi interprets the meaning of the Upanishadic renunciation as follows: Either "the enjoyment or use is the reward of renunciation," or "renunciation is the condition of enjoyment."[20]

The discovery of these Upanishadic teachings seemed to Gandhi "a second or new birth," a veritable moral "regeneration." Putting them into practice will create the conditions necessary for a nonviolent economic

19. R. E. Hume, trans., *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 362.

20. *CW*, 64, p. 264.

order. This would, he observes, "satisfy the cravings of the socialist and the communist, the philosopher and the economist."[21]

Gandhi is well aware of the moral difficulty that the wealthy faced in trying to practice these moral virtues. His famous 1916 lecture to the Economic Society of Muir College, Allahabad, in part, deals with this difficulty.[22] The centerpiece of the lecture is his brilliant analysis of the New Testament parable of the rich young man in chapter 10 of St. Mark's Gospel. This wealthy young man acquired his wealth by honest means. Yet he was not happy with his lifestyle. He was plagued by a deeply felt sense of spiritual emptiness. So he comes to Jesus for advice, to find out how he might inherit eternal life. Jesus advises him that in spite of his honesty in acquiring wealth, he still lacks one thing—spiritual detachment from the wealth he acquired. If he is serious about pursuing eternal life, he must sell everything, give the money to the poor, and follow him (Jesus). At this, the young man's face fell and he "went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth." The young man was not sufficiently detached from his wealth. He was unwilling to make a choice between wealth-making and meeting the conditions necessary for the pursuit of eternal life.

Gandhi's aim in this lecture is not to criticize the pursuit of wealth as such (how could he do this, given that the pursuit of artha was one of the ends of humans?), but to warn of the potential danger that lies in pursuing artha in isolation from dharma and the pursuit of moksha. In other words, he wants to make the point that the pursuit of artha and the practice of the requisite moral virtues must go hand in hand. What matters is not so much the amount of wealth one owns as one's attitude toward it and toward life in general. Gandhi questions the modern assumption that material wealth by itself is the true index of a nation's development. To be truly developed, a nation had to be spiritually and morally developed also. "It is a beautiful thing to know," Gandhi observes, "that the wealthiest among us have often felt that to have remained voluntarily

21. Ibid., p. 259.

22. *CW*, 13, pp. 310–17.

poor would have been a higher state for them. That you cannot serve God and mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. We have to make our choice. Western nations today are groaning under the heel of the monster-god of materialism. Their moral growth has been stunted . . . American wealth has become the standard. She [*sic*] is the envy of the other nations. I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such attempt if it were made is foredoomed to failure."[23] It is foredoomed because the pursuit of wealth in modern times is based on a fundamentally defective understanding of the meaning of wealth, namely as something that should be enjoyed in itself without the support of the requisite moral virtues.

## PRIVATE PROPERTY AND TRUSTEESHIP

For some, the right to private property is the sine qua non of individual civil liberty. For others it is the very basis of violence and class war, and as such, something that must be abolished. Gandhi understood that the fate of a nonviolent economic order depends on how it handles the question of private property. There is therefore no way he can avoid taking a stand on this thorny question. But taking a stand is doubly difficult for him because of the urgent need to put an end to India's chronic poverty, due in part to the abuse of the right to private property, and because of the obstacles to meeting that need posed by India's own princes, landlords, and industrialists who justified their behavior by appealing to the right to private property.

There is no doubt that Gandhi is clear on the sanctity of the right to private property. He firmly believes that it is grounded in the right to enjoy the fruits of one's labor and to have the necessities of life. He further believes that this right is among the "inalienable rights" of the Indian

23. Ibid., pp. 314–15.

people.[24] His training as a lawyer reinforced this belief, and makes him particularly sensitive to the importance of private property as a guarantor of the freedom, respect, and dignity of both individuals and communities. The denial of the right to private property to the poor in India accounts, in part, for their abysmal poverty. It should not be forgotten that Gandhi invented satyagraha in South Africa as a nonviolent means of defending the right of Indian immigrants to acquire and own private property.

Much as he fights against the exploitation of the poor by the Rajahs and Maharajas, the zamindars (landlords) and the industrialists, Gandhi never advocates the abolition of their right to private property. What he objects to very strongly and consistently is the manner in which they exercise the right. He would, he stated, be "no party to dispossessing the propertied classes of their private property without just cause," and he is prepared to throw "the whole weight" of his influence "in preventing class war." "Socialism and communism of the West," he asserts, are "based on certain conceptions" which are "fundamentally different from ours."[25]

Such is Gandhi's respect for the principle of the right to private property. As for its actual exercise in India, that is a different matter. Some of his harshest criticisms are directed at those who abuse it, especially the princely classes. Perhaps the most famous of these criticisms is made in the inaugural lecture that he gave in 1916 on the occasion of the opening of the Benares Hindu University. Among the audience was the cream of Indian princely classes, "the richly bedecked noblemen" as he calls them. They presented a "most gorgeous show, an exhibition of the greatest jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweler who chose to come from Paris." Then Gandhi proceeds to compare them with the millions of the poor, from whose labor they had accumulated their immense wealth. "And I feel like saying to these noblemen: 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India.'"[26] Gandhi's lecture embarrassed

24. *CW*, 42, p. 384.

25. *CW*, 58, pp. 247–48.

26. *CW*, 13, pp. 213–14.

the noblemen and caused so much commotion in the lecture hall that the chairwoman, Mrs. Annie Besant, called a halt to the entire proceedings.

Although Gandhi defends the right to private property, he does not believe that this right is absolute. In its exercise it is subject to the condition that it meets the legitimate needs of the political community in which one lives. In other words, the right to private property does not include right to exclude society from the fruits of your labor. Thus Gandhi stays clear of both the socialist-Marxist position of the abolition of private property by violent means and the laissez-faire capitalist position of the unfettered exercise of the right to private property.

In an attempt to reconcile nonviolently the need to safeguard the principle of private property with the need to prevent the abuses stemming from its unfettered exercise, Gandhi proposed his well-known theory of trusteeship. Its basic principle can be stated as follows: You are only the trustee of any excess wealth that you may have created. You have an inalienable right only to the necessities of life as determined by the standards of the society in which you live; the excess wealth you have, you hold in trust, to be used for the benefit of others. The institution of private property operates nonviolently when supported by the principle of trusteeship.

Thus Gandhi's position on private property differs from that of the Marxists, the socialists, and the liberals. The Marxists advocated the abolition of the right to private property in the means of production. The socialists and liberals in differing degrees wanted the welfare state to intervene. None of these groups recognized the validity of the principle of trusteeship. Gandhi, on the other hand, places the primary responsibility for acting according to the principle of trusteeship on the creators of wealth themselves. Only when they fail to act as trustees should the state intervene, and that too with only "a minimum of violence." "I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees; but if they fail, I believe that we shall have to deprive them of their possession through the state with a minimum exercise of violence." It is not clear what exactly "the minimum of violence" entails. What is clear, however, is that in his opinion

> the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the state . . . if the state suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself, and will fail to develop nonviolence at any time. The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.[27]

The point is that a nonviolent economic order is better off when it relies more on the ethical behavior of the creators of private wealth than on an unduly intrusive welfare state. Once again, the principle of trusteeship reminds one of the Gandhian mantra that artha should act in concert with dharma. This is not a utopian principle. There are actual corporations such as the Tatas of India that have a well-known tradition of implementing the spirit of the Gandhian principle of trusteeship.[28]

## LABOR: A DUTY

Gandhi gives considerable attention to the question of physical labor or bread labor (as he sometimes calls it), and its potential for creating a nonviolent economic order. His basic insight is that human labor can realize its potential to create a nonviolent society only when it is animated by ethical and spiritual norms. Paradoxically, he finds the entire ascetic tradition of India standing in his way, undermining as it does the esteem that everyone should have for manual work. It is hardly surprising that Indian asceticism did not give rise to anything resembling the Protestant ethic. On the contrary, it opposed any form of physical labor simply because it

27. *CW*, 59, pp. 318–19.

28. Jaydeep Balakrishnan, Ayesha Malhotra, and Loren Falkenberg, "Multilevel Corporate Responsibility: A Comparison of Gandhi's Trusteeship with Stakeholder and Stewardship Frameworks," *Journal of Business Ethics*, June 2015 (Epub).

was a secular activity. This explains why Gandhi's championing of the virtues of physical labor begins with an unusually searing criticism of the ascetic traditions of India as a whole. He regrets that the work-renouncing asceticism had exerted such a negative impact on Indian society. It made begging by monks and living off the labor of others look respectable and even meritorious. Instead of promoting the work ethic, it did everything to counteract it.

"Jesus was a carpenter" before he started his ministry, Gandhi observes. At the same time, he wonders "how much manual work the Buddha did before he attained wisdom."[29] He wants to know whether the Buddhist monastic system was established by the Buddha himself or by his successors. Whoever established it, the monasteries had become "stagnant." Buddhist monks in Ceylon, Burma, and Tibet, he notes, were "sunk in ignorance" and were "the veritable images of sloth." In India too, "the monks known as sannyasis" are not shining specimens of humanity.[30] His critique does not end there. Gandhi adds that if he had the good fortune "to be face to face" with someone like the Buddha, he would not hesitate to ask him "why he did not teach the gospel of work, in preference to one of contemplation." He would ask the same of poet saints of Hinduism such as Tukaram and Jnanadev.[31] The severity of these criticisms shows how radical Gandhi had become on the question of the work ethic.

The search for an ethical and spiritual foundation for physical labor leads Gandhi first to his beloved *Bhagavad-Gita*, and then to Ruskin, Tolstoy, and Timofei Bondaref, a nineteenth-century Russian thinker. In the course of an extended commentary on *Gita* 3: 8–16, he argues that *yagna* (sacrifice) in the *Gita* means physical labor. He is fully aware that he is departing from the interpretations of the traditionalists. "Some learned students" of the *Gita*, he observes, interpreted *yagna* to mean only the "ritual offering of food to the manes" and the like. These interpreters

29. *CW*, 42, p. 489.

30. *CW*, 50, p. 410.

31. *CW*, 62, p. 85.

excluded from the meanings of *yagna* action that had anything to do with physical labor. Rejecting this view, he argues that *yagna* in these passages means physical work, that is, work done not only for the private benefit of the worker but also for the benefit of society as a whole. The meaning of *yagna*, like that of other key terms in the *Gita*, he reminds his readers, underwent gradual historical changes over the centuries. Originally, *yagna* meant sacrifice involved in the ritual of worship. At one time *yagna* was associated with animal sacrifice, and later with the fire sacrifice in which twigs were ritually burned. However today, argues Gandhi, *yagna* means physical labor from which both the worker and society benefit. It is this new meaning of *yagna* that the *Gita* elaborates. In other words, the *Gita*, correctly interpreted, teaches an Indian version of the work ethic. Widening the scope of this interpretation, he observed how the famous dictum of St. Benedict, "*laborare est orare*—work is worship"—is in harmony with his new interpretation of *yagna* in the *Gita*.[32] More to the point, work engaged in the spirit of *yagna* has the potential to eliminate, or at least reduce, violence and exploitation from economic activities.

Bondaref and Tolstoy, in their turn, introduced the notion of duty into the discussion. Bread labor (as they called physical labor) is a "universal duty." It is so because humans are embodied beings. As such, everyone has an obligation to engage in some form of bodily labor. Gandhi agrees: Bodily labor is "our lot in life from which there is no escape."[33] Bread labor undertaken in the spirit of *yagna*, he argues, will help lessen economic inequality. In other words, it has a leveling effect: The rich will not "become masters of immeasurable stores of wealth and the millions would not be suffering in poverty." [34] "We come across distressing disparities in the world today because this universal duty has been neglected or forgotten."[35] Seen in this light, the charkha and khadi are the instruments

32. *CW*, 32, pp. 151–65.

33. Ibid., p. 158.

34. Ibid., p. 156.

35. *CW*, 42, p. 475.

of bringing about economic leveling in Indian society: Not even a Nehru or a Tagore, in Gandhi's view, is exempt from the universal duty of spending some time doing some form of manual work.

Ruskin adds to the discourse the idea of the dignity of all forms of work. As Gandhi states in his *Autobiography*, Ruskin showed how a lawyer's work had "the same value as the barber's" inasmuch as all have the same right to earn their livelihood from their work. Gandhi's love for poor peasants and weavers deepened as a result of his reading of *Unto This Last*. It taught him that "the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman was the life worth living."[36] Briefly, with Gandhi's stand on labor we see the beginning of the end of the belief in the caste division of labor.

## *CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME* AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES

Gandhi is keenly aware that structural changes in Indian society are absolutely necessary if his economic ideas were to have any lasting practical impact. He took two major steps to bring about such changes. The first is the passing of the famous 1931 Karachi Resolution on "Fundamental Rights and Economic Changes." The second is the publication of a new philosophical treatise—*Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place.*

The fundamental document that addresses the need for structural changes in India is of course the Indian Constitution of 1950. Gandhi did not contribute anything directly to its drafting (his assassination having occurred on January 30, 1948). The nearest he came to making a contribution was the passing of the Karachi resolution. There is universal agreement among experts that this Resolution is the inspiration for the "Directive Principles" of the 1950 Constitution.

Gandhi himself introduced the Resolution, which he drafted jointly with Jawaharlal Nehru, for debate at the annual meeting of the Indian

36. *CW*, 39, p. 239.

National Congress in Karachi. He reminded the Congress party that in passing it "we make it clear to the world and to our own people what we propose to do as soon as we come to power." The basic assumption of the Resolution is that political freedom should include "real economic freedom for the starving millions." This is possible only if the fundamental rights of every individual citizen are guaranteed. The Resolution also provides for a number of specific economic changes—a living wage for industrial workers, prohibition of child labor and serfdom, protection of women workers, provision for adequate maternity leave, the right to form labor unions, imposition of progressive income tax—to mention a few. The Resolution empowers the future government of an independent India to take the steps necessary to bring about these changes. Gandhi has a warning for the landlords, Rajahs, and Maharajahs: "let them make an earnest endeavor to understand the grievances of their tenants and introduce adequate measures of relief before legislation overtakes them." All those resisting these changes are asked to bear in mind that "the poor man's swaraj" is coming soon, and that they should not be found "unprepared" when it actually arrives.[37]

But it is in *Constructive Programme*[38] that Gandhi makes his most important and also somewhat unexpected proposals for nonviolent structural changes. Somewhat unexpected, because the same person who from 1906 extolled the need for civil disobedience in order to attain independence, in 1945, downgrades its importance in favor of the constructive program. By the constructive program Gandhi means works of *national* importance affecting economic and social issues, motivated by the ethics of service (*seva*), and carried out by a multitude of nonviolent, nonprofit, voluntary, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Satyagraha, as Gandhi sees it in 1945, had accomplished its great historic mission. He

37. For the text of the Resolution and Gandhi's inaugural speech, see *CW*, 45, pp. 370–74.

38. Drafted in 1941, and revised in 1945. The Foreword appears in *CW*, 82, pp. 66–68, and the rest of the text in *CW*, 75, pp. 146–66—an editorial anomaly. To avoid confusion, I refer to the text as the Pamphlet (Gandhi's word) and the works stipulated by the Pamphlet as the "constructive program."

now realizes that postcolonial India will need the constructive program more than civil disobedience. The shift in emphasis is almost seismic.

The philosophic importance of the Pamphlet is second only to that of *Hind Swaraj*. Though written four decades apart, they are best read in tandem. Such a reading will give a clear picture of Gandhi's final thoughts on the role of civil disobedience in postcolonial India: that is, as a stimulus to the constructive program.

The Pamphlet addresses three issues. First, the scope of the constructive program. Second, the place of civil disobedience in winning national independence. Third, the relationship of the constructive program to party politics.

The scope of the constructive program is very ambitious indeed. It is nothing less than nonviolent nation-building: "the whole of constructive program . . . is designed to build up the nation from the very bottom upward."[39] Its focus is on national, not local issues. The Pamphlet lists eighteen such national issues.[40] For the sake of brevity, I group them under the following ten headings: (1) ending religious conflicts, especially between Hindus and Muslims; (2) ending suppression of the Dalits, (3) the Adivasis (Aboriginals), and (4) women; (5) issues affecting education, including adult education; (6) issues affecting peasants and industrial workers; (7) health; (8) national hygiene and sanitation; (9) the welfare of students; and (10) the care of the marginalized such as lepers and the homeless.

These national issues should be addressed by nonviolent NGOs driven by the ethic of service (*seva*). Constructive programs belong entirely to the private sector. It springs from Gandhian liberalism at its best. The NGOs operate independently of the welfare state, but they are ready to cooperate with it whenever and wherever it is expedient to do so.

The focus of civil disobedience, Gandhi now says, should be on local, not national issues: "civil disobedience is not absolutely necessary to win

39. *CW*, 82, p. 67.

40. *CW*, 75, p. 147–64.

freedom through purely nonviolent effort, if the cooperation of the whole nation is secured in the constructive program."[41] Since such cooperation is not available, civil disobedience may have a role to play. The Pamphlet makes three points on this matter. First, civil disobedience "can effectively be offered for the redress of a local wrong." Second, it can be offered "without regard to effect, though aimed at a particular wrong or evil." He explains this point by referring to the 1917 Champaran satyagraha. "I offered civil disobedience without any regard to the effect, and well knowing that even the people might remain apathetic." Third, "In the place of full response to constructive effort, it can be offered as in 1941. Though it was a contribution to and part of the battle for freedom, it was purposely centered round a particular issue, i.e., free speech."[42]

As for the connection between the constructive program and civil disobedience, in the first two cases mentioned above, "no elaborate constructive program was or could be necessary." But when civil disobedience is devised for the attainment of independence, "previous preparation is necessary, and it has to be backed by the visible and conscious effort of those who are engaged in the battle." In this sense "civil disobedience is a stimulation for the fighters and a challenge to the opponent."[43] Again, "civil disobedience, mass or individual, is an aid to constructive work."[44] The constructive program is the really important thing.

A surprising statement on the relevance of civil disobedience for the attainment of national independence follows. Surprising, because hitherto the belief was that civil disobedience was *the* means of attaining national independence. The Pamphlet marks a shift in emphasis: "Civil disobedience can never be directed for a general cause such as for independence. The issue must be definite and capable of being clearly understood and within the power of the opponent to yield."[45] Gandhi comes down hard

41. *CW*, 75, p. 165.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. *CW*, 82, p. 67.

45. Ibid.

on those who still adhere to the old belief: "civil disobedience in terms of independence without the cooperation of the millions by way of constructive effort is mere bravado and worse than useless."[46] Again, "For my handling of civil disobedience without the constructive program will be like the paralysed hand attempting to lift a spoon."[47]

Gandhi's 1945 shift of emphasis is not reflected in the vast secondary literature that has grown up on civil disobedience/satyagraha. Joan Bondurant's *Conquest of Violence*, for example, devotes 130 pages to satyagraha and only two to the constructive program, calling the latter a *branch* of satyagraha.[48] Similarly, Raghavan Iyer's magnum opus has 94 pages on satyagraha, but only two on the constructive program, calling the latter one of the *methods* of satyagraha.[49] The excellent article of Karuna Mantena uses the terms "destructive and constructive satyagraha" to explain her views on Gandhi's nonviolent politics.[50]

The Gandhi of the pre-1945 period is partly responsible for scholars placing too much emphasis on civil disobedience/satyagraha and too little on the constructive program. To be fair, Gandhi had warned those who studied his writings:

> I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. . . . What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any

46. *CW*, 75, p. 165.

47. Ibid., p. 166.

48. Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 32.

49. R. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (Santa Barbara, CA: Concord Grove Press, 1983), p. 301.

50. Karuna Mantena, "Another Realism: The Politics of Gandhian Nonviolence," *American Political Science Review*, 106 (2), 2012, pp. 463 ff.

> inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.[51]

The time has come, I think, to take Gandhi's warning seriously, and to give priority to the constructive program over satyagraha/civil disobedience.[52] Nation-building in postcolonial India requires a shift in emphasis.

Finally, the Pamphlet briefly touches on the relationship of the constructive program to party politics. The Foreword indicates that Gandhi allocated a place to party politics in his political philosophy. His position is the following: "If this preliminary observation [in the Pamphlet] has gone home to the reader, he will find the constructive program to be full of deep interest. It should prove as absorbing as politics so called and platform oratory, and certainly more important and useful."[53] "Politics so called and platform oratory," I think, refer to party politics.

## THE "DRAFT CONSTITUTION OF THE CONGRESS"

Gandhi's promotion of the constructive program does not end with the Pamphlet of 1945. It finds its final expression three years later, in 1948, in his last formal writing on Indian political philosophy. I am referring to the "Draft Constitution of the Congress," written on January 29, 1948, the eve of his assassination. Published in *Harijan*, it has come to be known as his "Last Will and Testament."[54] Its political philosophy is an extension of the philosophy of the Pamphlet of 1945.

51. *Harijan* 29-4-1933, p. 2. (*Harijan*, a weekly edited by Gandhi.)

52. On the extraordinary influence of Gandhi on the proliferation of nonviolent NGOs in postcolonial India, see the excellent monograph of R. Sooryamoorthy and K. D. Gangrade, *NGOs in India* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001). The authors remark that nonviolent NGOs in India now constitute the "third universal force," the first universal force being the government, and the second universal force, the modern corporations.

53. *CW*, 82, p. 68.

54. *CW*, 90, pp. 526–28.

The argument is straightforward. The Indian National Congress, instead of a political party, should become a Lok Sevak Sangh (an Association for the Service of the People). The reason is that the nonviolent structural transformation of postcolonial India requires the spirit of service (*seva*) more than it needs the adversarial spirit of party politics. No political party can successfully serve two masters—the ethic of service and the ideology of the party. The Congress therefore has to choose which master it wants to serve. As for Gandhi, he would choose service (*seva*).

The "Draft" pays generous tribute to the historic role that the Congress party played in Indian history. India attained its independence "through the means devised by the Indian National Congress." But Gandhi insists that postcolonial India needs more than just political independence—it needs nonviolent nation-building from below. The Congress "in its present form, i.e., as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine has outlived its use." It has become caught in an internal power struggle, and has been drawn into unhealthy competition with other political parties. "For these and similar reasons, it should disband its existing organization" and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh.[55]

In highlighting the ethic of service (*seva*), Gandhi draws on an ethic found in all the spiritual traditions prevalent in India. Here again, we see his mind trying to make the ends of artha, dharma, and the pursuit of moksha to operate harmoniously. In Pax Gandhiana *seva* is an independent and indispensable source of inspiration, one that releases deep moral and spiritual forces for the betterment of society—regardless of the religious or ethnic differences of the recipients of the service in question. There is a good deal that nonviolent NGOs can do to better the condition of women, the Dalits, the Adivasis, and those discriminated against because of their religion.

What the Pamphlet of 1945 and the "Draft" of 1948 have in common is the flexibility characteristic of Gandhi's political practice. Though the inventor of satyagraha, he is now willing to downgrade its importance

55. *CW*, 90, pp. 526–27.

vis-à-vis the constructive program. Although the leading guide of the Indian National Congress party from 1919 to 1948, he is now prepared to downgrade its importance as a political party in favor of nonviolent NGOs.

The Pamphlet makes it clear that Gandhi is not against party politics as such. He wants the Congress party of 1948 to disband itself. If some members of that party want to form a new party, they are free to do so. All that Gandhi suggests is that postcolonial India needs the spirit of service more than the spirit of party politics.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion we can identify the four conditions necessary for the flourishing of Pax Gandhiana. In the order of importance they are the following: First, it requires the coercive politics of the constitutional order, established by the consent of the people, expressed in the constitution, and put into practice jointly by honest federal, state, and local governments.[56] Second, it requires the politics of nonviolent NGOs engaged in the constructive program. Gandhi believes that if India is "to live and live well there is no alternative to the constructive program."[57] Next, Pax Gandhiana requires the politics of satyagraha/civil disobedience, though limited to redressing specific, local (and not national) issues. Finally, it requires party politics that seek political power through free and fair elections.

56. Pax Gandhiana does not leave India to anarchy. On "Gandhi leaving India to anarchy," see Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 151–84.

57. *CW*, 90, p. 295.

# 7

# Civilizations and Political Power

The idea of civilization occupies a prominent place in Gandhi's political philosophy. A country's civilization is an index to its people's character. Civilizations are belligerent when they are tied to political and military power. Peace among civilizations is possible when they are free of such ties.

*Hind Swaraj* devotes two chapters to the topic of civilization. The only other topic to which it devotes two chapters is "swaraj." Gandhi signals that in his political philosophy the concepts of civilization and swaraj play significant roles. As we shall see below, his own concept of civilization does not assume an alignment with political power. Pax Gandhiana stands for a peaceful and nonviolent political order, both domestically and internationally. It has no room for a belligerent civilization. Indeed, it is the very antithesis of a belligerent civilization. In the end, it stands for a

new kind of sovereignty that harmonizes the interests of individual states with the community of states.

Samuel P. Huntington in his celebrated, if controversial book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, argues that civilizations clash. They clash when they are aligned to military power, and become handmaidens of imperialism.[1] Imperial powers of the past tended to justify their behavior partly in terms of a "civilizing mission." With the decolonization of the world in the twentieth century—to which Gandhi contributed significantly—the idea of a belligerent civilization has become quite untenable. Current jihadism is the exception. It seeks to revive the old universal caliphate and to spread its version of a belligerent civilization.

Gandhi himself was caught in a clash of three civilizations—modern civilization, the Islamic civilization emerging in modern South Asia, and the Hindutva civilization emerging in modern India. These clashes provide the historical context of his concept of civilization.

## GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF CIVILIZATION

We begin with his famous 1909 definition in *Hind Swaraj*: "Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty [*farajj*] and observance of morality [*niti*] are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain self-mastery over our mind [*mann*] and our passions [*indriyon*]. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization means 'good conduct.'"[2]

As one can see, his definition is apolitical and nonideological. The emphasis is on duty and morality, self-control, and true self-knowledge. In the original Gujarati text, civilized conduct is called *sudharo*—the outcome of a process of constant self-improvement. *Sudharo* is contrasted

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

2. *HS*, p. 65.

with *kudharo*, barbarism, an anomic condition, totally lacking in true self-knowledge and self-discipline. For Gandhi civilization and barbarism reflect opposite inner states. To be civilized is to have self-knowledge and self-mastery. One's positive attitude toward one's duties is helped by the force of *sudharo* or civilization. It helps form good habits, which in turn makes it easy for a citizen to live by the rules of ordinary ethics (*niti*). Gandhi is not saying that in civilization everyone acquires good habits and acts from a sense of duty. What he is saying is that civilization has a subtle effect on the moral development of its adherents. It is easier, for example, to adhere to one's duties in a civilization that promotes the values of self-knowledge and self-mastery than in one that is antinomian and permissive. I do not think Gandhi is being puritanical here; he is only pointing out that civilization, in emphasizing duty, self-knowledge, and self-mastery, can have a positive impact on the moral ethos of individuals and society.

But there is one very important element missing in the 1909 definition. There is no mention of the political and economic aspects of Gandhian civilization. In 1931 he makes an important addition to the 1909 definition. The famous Karachi resolution, discussed in the previous chapter, makes modern values such as individual liberty; equality; freedom of conscience, association, and expression; economic justice; gender equality; and the religious neutrality of the state integral parts of Pax Gandhiana. This means that rights and duties coexist in Gandhi's concept of civilization, just as artha and dharma coexist in his political philosophy.

The state has a critical role to play in Gandhi's concept of civilization. It is a negative role: Where rights are involved, the state is involved in a negative way, by preventing a clash based on rights. Whereas duty is self-enforced, rights can be enforced only by a state playing a negative role, as enforcer and defender of individual rights and freedoms. Thus, the state plays an indispensable role in civilization, and because of this, the oppressed become the beneficiaries of civilization. Yet Gandhi's state, like Thoreau's, governs least. Governing least does not mean that the state is negligent or incompetent. Without a state that governs least, there will

be chaos and barbarism, and no modern Gandhian civilization. This is Gandhi's clear and firm position.

It goes without saying the Gandhian state is not an imperial state. There is therefore no danger of its promoting a belligerent civilization and embarking on a civilizing mission. Similarly, the Gandhian state is not tied to a particular political ideology such as Hindutva or Maoism or Marxism. Freedom from an ideological program and abstention from an aggressive civilizing mission distinguish the Gandhian state from the imperial and the modern state.

Indian civilization as it exists now, says Gandhi, is sound only in its foundation—that is, in the theory of the ends of human life or the *purusharthas*. Historically, Indian civilization often failed to pursue the ends of life in a coordinated way. As a result, elements of barbarism crept in—stagnation; misogyny; patriarchy; oppression of the Dalits, the Adivasis, and religious minorities; and the hierarchical order based on caste or *jati*, to mention a few. He recognizes that India stands in urgent need of civilizational reform and renewal. It must get rid of the elements of barbarism—*kudharo*—with the help of the "new spirit born in us."[3] He is aware that pursuing the canonical ends of life in an oppositional way is indeed barbaric, and that civilization requires that the ends of life be pursued in conjunction with each other. Insofar as Indian civilization teaches this basic truth, it can be considered a superior civilization—but not otherwise.

## MODERN CIVILIZATION

By modern civilization Gandhi means the civilization that first arose in the West following the epistemological, scientific, and the industrial revolutions, and then spread to the rest of the world. The colonial conquests in Asia, the Americas, Africa, and Australia were partly consequences of these revolutions.

3. *HS*, p. 69.

On the epistemological front, modern civilization recognizes reason and empirical evidence as the sole bases of valid knowledge. It rejects knowledge based on metaphysics and religious experience as invalid; such knowledge is useful only to satisfy the emotional needs of those who accept them. The epistemological revolution led to a change in attitude toward ethics and religion. Atheism became, as it were, the modern substitute for religious belief. In the sphere of ethics "Man" remains the measure of all things. There is no limit to what humans may do, save that required by the principle of avoiding harm to others. Everything is legally permitted so long as it has the support of majority opinion and the sanction of the law.

The relationship between reason and the passions also underwent a radical change in modernity. It is cast in favor of the passions, whose satisfaction has become one of the driving forces of modern civilization. This is especially the case with the respect to the passions for wealth, power, and sexual pleasure. Science and technology are treated as if they are the servants of these passions. The value of moral virtue depends on a utilitarian calculus of public benefit. The idea of a transcendental moral order is given up because of its dependence on an allegedly untenable metaphysics. So also the relationship of "Man" to God. A radical secularism replaces or seeks to replace the notion of any fellowship between "Man" and God, between what lies within history and what lies outside it.[4] Even though radical secularism rejects God, at the same time it has no compunction in inventing substitute deities in the form of Science, High Culture, High Art, Humanity, Will of History, the Nation, the State, and the like. Eventually modernity morphs into antifoundational postmodernity where antinomian relativism prevails.[5]

4. On the rise of modern secularism, see Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Rajeev Bhargawa, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

5. Terry Eagleton, *Culture and the Death of God* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

Gandhi's fundamental criticism of modern civilization is that "people living in it make bodily welfare the object of life."[6] This criticism is based on his theory of the *purusharthas*—the phrase "the object of life" in the original Gujarati being *purushartha*. In other words, Gandhi uses the theory of the *purusharthas* to classify civilizations. Modern civilization is defective to the extent that it focuses solely on bodily welfare, and to the extent that it neglects spiritual welfare. In its relentless pursuit of artha and kama, it completely ignores dharma and the pursuit of moksha. Its chief characteristic, says Gandhi, is that it worships the "the body more than the spirit," and gives "everything for the glorification of the body."[7] This criticism is all the more telling since it comes from the author of a best-selling pamphlet on bodily heath, *Key to Health*, "the most popular of all [his] writings."[8]

Gandhi sees a strong link between economic, political, and military power on the one hand, and modern civilization on the other. Throughout history, as Samuel Huntington observes, there has been an alliance between the expansion of imperial power and the expansion of the civilization that the imperial power in question represents. "Universal civilization requires universal power. . . . Western power in the form of European colonialism in the nineteenth century and American hegemony in the twentieth century extended Western culture throughout much of the contemporary world."[9]

Gandhi had come to a similar conclusion very early in the twentieth century. He saw how colonial and civilizational interests were joined in an unholy alliance. From modern civilization, he writes, "there flow two propositions which have almost become maxims to live by." They are "might is right," and "survival of the fittest."[10] Those who are politically

6. *HS*, p. 34.

7. *CW*, 9, p. 476.

8. M. K. Gandhi, *Key to Health*, written in 1906 and revised in 1942, trans. Sushila Nayar (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1948).

9. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 91.

10. *CW*, 8, p. 243.

and economically weak will be conquered by those who are strong: This is seen not only as a law of nature but also as a law of modern civilization. Accordingly, the protagonists of modern civilization devote most of their time to the conservation of brute force. They assert that "the nations which do not increase their material wants are doomed to destruction. It is in pursuance of these principles that Western nations have settled in South Africa and subdued the numerically overwhelmingly superior races of South Africa."[11]

Modern civilization lacks a spiritual center, writes Gandhi: It is "centrifugal"—moving away from a transcending spiritual goal.[12] It promotes incessant activity that leads primarily to the increase of wealth, power, and pleasure. There is no transcending goal that coordinates these material pursuits. "This civilization takes note neither of morality [*niti*] nor of religion [dharma]." It is "godless" (*nirishwari*).[13]

Gandhi's metaphors for modern civilization are highly suggestive. It is the Upas tree (a Javanese tree so poisonous that it can destroy life for many miles around).[14] It is the whirlwind that swirls around, sweeping everything in its path. The legal and medical professions in particular are caught in this whirlwind. They are in danger of becoming profit driven professions. "This civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed."[15]

While Gandhi rejects the epistemological and metaphysical premises of modern civilization, he embraces its scientific spirit and some of its key political values—fundamental rights, civil liberty, freedom of conscience, expression, and association, and so forth. Even though he is aware of Edward Carpenter's notion of modern civilization as a disease, he corrects Carpenter to say that it is not "an incurable disease."[16] The

11. *CW*, 29, pp. 77–78.

12. *CW*, 8, p. 244.

13. *HS*, pp. 36, 69.

14. *HS*, p. 60.

15. *HS*, p. 37.

16. *HS*, p. 106.

cure consists in applying the theory of the balanced pursuit of the ends of human life. The pursuit of bodily welfare should be balanced by the pursuit of spiritual welfare.

Gandhi wants the emerging Indian civilization to integrate the scientific spirit and the modern political values mentioned above. At the same time, he does not want the new Indian civilization to have an alliance with any ideology that the state may promote. Such alliances will only lead to new forms of barbarism. Pax Gandhiana hopes to avoid all such alliances. In particular, he wants all religions to coexist peacefully in the new Indian civilization. On this crucial point, however, he was seriously challenged by both Jinnah and Savarkar.

## THE EMERGENCE OF A SOUTH ASIAN MUSLIM CIVILIZATION

My aim here is very, very limited: to ask how much Mohammad Ali Jinnah's mission of creating Pakistan (and the future Bangladesh) was driven by his concept of a South Asian Islamic civilization. This question is of course a part of the much broader question of the role of Islam in India, particularly modern India, which for good reason I do not address here. Faisal Devji has given us an excellent account of how Western notions of "blood and soil," history and geography, do not help our understanding of the nature of Muslim nationalism in South Asia.[17] At the same time, we have no choice but to examine the course that history actually took, and to recognize how concepts such as "Islam as a cultural force," territory, and state actually influenced the progress of Muslim nationalism in the region. The roles played by Muhammad Iqbal and M. A. Jinnah were decisive.

A brief reference to the background history is unavoidable, however. India from the middle of the nineteenth century had become a laboratory

17. Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

for testing two contrasting hypotheses. One was that Islam should be the basis of the social and political identity of Indian Muslims, and that for this they would ultimately need a separate Muslim state. The other hypothesis was that Islam indeed would be necessary for the social and political identity of Indian Muslims, but that for this they would not need a separate Muslim state. The first hypothesis underlies the political thought of Muhammad Iqbal, Jinnah, and with some modifications, that of Syyid Mawdudi and Syyid Hasan Ali Nadvi. The second hypothesis underlies the political thought of Abul Kalam Azad, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Zakir Husain, and intellectuals such as M. Mujeeb.

The extinction of the Moghul Empire in the nineteenth century posed an intellectual problem for thoughtful Indian Muslims. Hitherto they had played the role of an imperial ruling class. The basis of political power was now passing from hereditary monarchy to nation—however the latter was defined. The Indian National Congress—which included many Muslims—held that the state should be neutral toward religion, including Islam. Indian Muslims found themselves in an unaccustomed position of a weak political minority in a strong Hindu-majority Indian nation. Some of them had serious doubts about belonging to such a pluralistic political community, and genuine fears about losing their identity as Muslims. They responded by forming the Muslim League (1906).

The thinker who first addressed these intellectual problems seriously was Iqbal. His *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* sought to "reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy with due regard to the philosophical tradition of Islam."[18] Part of the reconstruction involved finding a political theory suitable for Indian Muslims and compatible with the Sharia. His 1930 presidential address to the Muslim League seemed to have found the beginnings of a solution: It connected the idea of Islam as a cultural force with the idea of Islam seeking a territory and a state. It called for the creation of a Muslim India: "I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a

18. M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 2003), pp. v–vi.

single state." The formation of such a state seemed to him "to be the final destiny of Muslims at least of North-West India. . . . The life of Islam as a *cultural force* in this living country very largely depends on its centralization in a specified territory."[19] In other words, the "cultural force" of Islam required that Indian Muslims should have a state of their own, even though they had many well-known theological and canonical disputes dividing them.

In 1937, following his 1930 address, Iqbal wrote to Jinnah—now president of Muslim League—making two further points. The first concerned the Sharia, and the second, the possibility of a civil-war in India.

> After long and careful study of Islamic Law I have come to the conclusion that if this system of Law is properly understood and applied, at last the right to subsistence is secure to everybody. But the enforcement and development of the Shariat of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim state or states. This has been my honest conviction for many years and I still believe this to be the only way to solve the problem of bread for Muslims as well as to secure a peaceful India. If such a thing is impossible in India the only alternative is a civil war which as a matter of fact has been going on for some time in the shape of Hindu-Muslim riots.[20]

Iqbal died a year later, in 1938. The person who carried forward the substance of Iqbal's political philosophy was Jinnah. Three elements constituted his political philosophy: Islam in India is a "cultural force"; its expression requires a suitable Muslim territory and a suitable state. Irrespective of any bargaining strategies that Jinnah used as a political leader—and he used several—he never diluted the substance of the political philosophy that he inherited from the poet-founder. As Hafeez Malik

19. In C. H. Philips, ed., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858–1947* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 239. Italics mine.

20. Cited in Hafeez Malik, ed., *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 385–86.

remarks, "Jinnah and Iqbal espoused Muslim nationalism, and envisaged for Islam a progressive role."[21]

One would not have expected a highly sophisticated and secular-minded Indian Muslim to don the mantle of the cofounder of an Islam-inspired state in the subcontinent. Jinnah began his illustrious career as a supporter of the second hypothesis mentioned above. A supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity, he was perceived by many as a Muslim Gokhale—urbane, sober, erudite, and a political pluralist in outlook. But all that changed by the mid-1930s, for reasons into which it is not necessary to enter here. He became the ardent leader of the separatist wing of the Indian Muslim nationalism, as distinct from the nationalist wing of the same—led by Maulana Azad.

Jinnah stated very cogently his reasons for a separate Muslim state, in his famous 1940 presidential address to the Muslim League. The idea of an Islamic civilization is the key to his argument here: Hinduism and Islam,

> are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders, and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality, and this misconception of one Indian nation has gone far beyond the limits and is the cause of most of your troubles and will lead India to destruction if we fail to revise our notions in time. Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literatures. They neither intermarry nor interdine together and, indeed they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their outlook on life and of life are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes, and different episodes. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other, and, likewise, their victories and

21. Hafeez Malik, ed., *Pakistan: Founders' Aspirations and Today's Realities* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 1. Note, according to Malik, Iqbal and Jinnah are the cofounders of Pakistan.

> defeats overlap. To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead in growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be built up for the government of such a state.[22]

Once again notions of Islamic civilization, territory, and the state become linked. A plainer theory of "the clash of civilizations" can hardly be found.

In 1941 Jinnah found himself cutting a deal with Mawdudi, the founder of the newly established fundamentalist party, the Jamaat-i-Islami. Mawdudi urged Jinnah that the future Muslim state should be grounded in Islam. Jinnah saw "no incompatibility" between Mawdudi's demand and his own position. The Muslim League did not have the time, Jinnah replied, "to define the nature of the future state." He promised, however, to strive for a Muslim state, provided Mawdudi supported the formation of Pakistan. "I seek to secure the land for the mosque," was Jinnah's response; "once that land belongs to us, then we can decide on how to build the mosque."[23]

In 1944 Jinnah took his argument directly to Gandhi. Here again the idea of Muslim nationalism shaped by an Indian Muslim civilization played a key role.

> We maintain and hold that Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definition or test of a nation. We are a nation of hundred million, and what is more, we are a nation with our own culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions; in short we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life.[24]

22. C. H. Philips, ed., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858–1947*, pp. 353–54.

23. Cited in Syyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 113.

24. Jinnah to Gandhi, September 17, 1944, *CW*, 78, p. 407.

In his next letter, he reminds Gandhi of the Sharia that gives Muslims the right to establish their own state in provinces where they are the majority—with or without the consent of the non-Muslim inhabitants there:

> Can you not appreciate our point of view that we claim the right of self-determination as a nation and not as a territorial unit, and that we are entitled to exercise our inherent right as a Muslim nation, which is our birth-right? . . . The right of self-determination which we claim postulates that we are a nation, and as such it would be the self-determination of the Mussalmans, and they alone are entitled to exercise that right.[25]

The strategy of using what Jinnah called "direct [violent] action" was not far off.

According to Humayun Mirza, Jinnah "was prepared to go to any length to achieve Pakistan"—even to jihad, if necessary. In February 1947, he asked Iskander Mirza (then in the government of India, later the first president of Pakistan) to resign from government and return to the tribal region of Waziristan. "There he was to start a jihad against the British." Jinnah had the funds ready for this—Rs. 10 million for the jihad itself, and Rs. 20,000 for Mirza's personal expenses. As the attainment of Pakistan became a certainty a few months later, Jinnah dropped the idea of a jihad.[26]

Meanwhile, Maulana Azad was gathering the support of nationalist Indian Muslims for his version of an ecumenical Islamic civilization in India. Although he began his career as a promoter of jihad against the imperial infidels, he radically changed his mind after coming into contact with Gandhi and his political philosophy. While Jinnah did not take jihad

25. Jinnah to Gandhi, 21 September 1944, *CW*, 78, pp. 410–11.

26. Humayun Mirza, *From Plassey to Pakistan: The Family History of Iskander Mirza, the First President of Pakistan* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), p. 151.

off the table in his quest for Pakistan, Azad abandoned it in his quest for a pluralistic India. His commitment to a pluralistic India was based on the teaching of the Koran on the nature of *din*—"the righteous way of living." *Din* can bring people of different faiths together to form a pluralistic political community. Seen in this light, according to Azad, the Koran does not ask followers of other religions to convert to Islam, but only "to return to the true form of their own religion."[27] In other words, Azad's interpretation of Islam recognized the ecumenical character of Islam, the de jure legitimacy of all religions, and the possibility of a pluralistic Indian political community of which Indian Muslims would be an integral part.

Azad went one step further: While *din* was common to all believers and unchangeable, he insisted that the Sharia was changeable, being specific to time, place and peoples. The Sharia in India therefore could be adapted to meet the needs of the pluralistic political community emerging there. Azad argued that history has shown that after the first few decades of its existence, Islam was unable to unite all Muslims into one state on the basis of Islam alone.[28]

Jinnah did not have much time for Azad's notion of an Islamic civilization. As Ramin Jahanbegloo points out, Azad failed to persuade Jinnah.[29] Jinnah's notion of Islamic civilization won the day. Pakistan, which he cofounded, gradually evolved into a nursery of Islamic fundamentalism—something that Jinnah could never have anticipated.

Yet Azad's position gives all nationalist Muslims in South Asia sound Islamic reasons why they should embrace a pluralistic political community. In doing so, Azad was in part influenced by the notion of Pax Gandhiana, especially its concept of civic nationalism and nonviolence as policy.

27. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), p. 462.

28. Maulana Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1959), p. 227.

29. R. Jahanbegloo, *The Gandhian Moment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 124.

## SAVARKAR, HINDUTVA, AND CIVILIZATION

If Jinnah's concept of civilization helped divide Hindus and Muslims into two hostile states, Vinay Damodar Savarkar's concept of civilization helped divide Indians into two hostile camps within the same state. Yet another example of a "fearful symmetry." His *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* (1923), is the counterpart of *Hind Swaraj*. Each offers its own vision of India: one excluding Indian Muslims and Indian Christians, and the other including all the inhabitants of the territory of India.

*Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* (*Hindutva*, hereafter) is concerned with clarifying the meanings of the terms "Hindutva" and "Hindu." The ultimate object of this clarification, as we shall see below, is the attempt—in the name of national unity—to separate Indian Muslims and Indian Christians from the rest of the Indian population. Savarkar believed that to do so would strengthen the Indian nation.

Hindutva is not the same as Hinduism, asserts Savarkar: "Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva. . . . Hindutva is not identical with what is vaguely indicated by the term Hinduism."[30] Hinduism is a religion, a set of religious beliefs and doctrines, "peculiar and native" to the peoples of India. Hindutva on the other hand is a political ideology that looks after the political interests of Hindus. It transcends the internal sectarian disputes among religious Hindus. It makes no distinction between Hindus who believe in the teachings of Hinduism and those who do not. All Hindus share the quality of Hindutva equally. According to Savarkar, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Santhaals, Kolis, Bhils, Panchamas, Namashudras, "and all other such tribes and classes" are technically Hindus, and possess the quality of Hindutva.[31]

What then is Hindutva? It is a quality made up of three elements: a common race (*jati*), a common civilization (*sanskriti*), and a common

30. V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* (New Delhi: Bharti Sahitya Sadan, 1989), pp. 3–4.

31. Ibid., p. 120.

nationality (*rashtra*).[32] "Hindus are not merely the citizens of the Indian state because they are united not only by the bonds of the love they bear to a common motherland but also by the bonds of a common blood. They are not only a Nation but also a race—*jati*." [33] That the inhabitants of India, excluding Indian Muslims and Christians, belong to the same race is anthropological nonsense. Nevertheless Savarkar promotes this idea for political reasons, which paradoxically only increases the sense of national disunity.

The idea of a common civilization is most important to the argument in *Hindutva*. Savarkar defines civilization as "the expression of the mind of man. Civilization is the account of what man has made of matter. If matter is the creation of the Lord, then civilization is the miniature secondary creation of man. At its best, it is the perfect triumph of the soul of man over matter and man alike. Wherever and to the extent to which man has succeeded in molding matter to the delight of his soul, civilization begins."[34]

Hindu civilization expresses its soul through literature, art, science, architecture, religion, festivals, political and social institutions, food, dress, customs, and manners. To possess the quality of Hindutva, one must embrace these aspects of Hindu civilization.

In addition, Savarkar introduces the new idea of a quasi-mysterious relationship between Hindu civilization and the land of India. He argues that if a religion has its origin in the land of India, it possesses the quality of Hindutva. This was true of original Buddhism; however, when it became a universal religion and spread to foreign lands, it gradually lost its Hindutva character. The political consequences of Buddhism's expansion outside India were disastrous to "the national virility and even the national existence of our race."[35] The moment it became universal it ceased

32. Ibid., p. 116.

33. Ibid., p. 84.

34. Ibid., p. 92.

35. Ibid., p. 18.

to be national. Savarkar argues that universal Buddhism with its emphasis on the dharma of passive nonviolence and universal brotherhood, made India open prey to foreign invaders. It was therefore necessary for it to be replaced by Hinduism. "Thus it was political and national necessity that was at once the cause and the effect of the decline of Buddhism in India. Buddhism has its geographical center of gravity nowhere. So it was an imperative need to restore at least the national center of gravity that India had lost in attempting to get identified with Buddhism."[36]

Savarkar's notion of India as a holy land and fatherland is a variation on the theme of mysticism associated with land. To qualify for Hindutva one must regard India not only as one's fatherland but also as one's holy land. And since the holy lands of Indian Muslims and Indian Christians are Arabia and Israel, respectively, they cannot possess the quality of Hindutva. They "possess all the essential qualifications of Hindutva but one and that is that they do not look upon India as their Holyland."[37] Though India is their fatherland, and although they share with Hindus "almost pure Hindu blood and parentage," they cannot be recognized as Hindus. Because they have embraced non-Indian religion, they cease "to own Hindu civilization (*Sanskriti*) as a whole."[38]

Indian Muslims, in particular, are the enemies of Hindus: The day Mohammad of Gazni crossed the Indus, a "conflict of life and death began. Nothing makes Self conscious of itself so much as a conflict with non-Self. Nothing can weld people into a nation and nations into a state as the pressure of a common foe. Hatred separates as well as unites."[39]

Indians Muslims and Indian Christians can qualify for Hindutva only if they return and join "the Hindu fold."[40] They can do so in one of two ways: either through religious conversion, or through marriage to a

36. Ibid., p. 28.

37. Ibid., p. 113.

38. Ibid., pp. 100–101.

39. Ibid., pp. 42–43.

40. Ibid., p. 84; the term "Hindu fold" is used also on p. 115.

Hindu. Savarkar used the example of Sister Nivedita (1867–1911) to make his point. Margaret Elizabeth Noble was a Christian born in Ireland. She converted to Hinduism, and became a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, taking the new name Nivedita. She did not marry a Hindu, but by converting to Hinduism she met Savarkar's requirements. He writes: "And therefore we must say that any convert of non-Hindu parentage to Hindutva can be a Hindu, if *bona fide*, he or she adopts our land as his or her country and marries a Hindu, thus coming to love our land as a real Fatherland and adopts our culture and thus adores our land as the *Punyabhu* [Holy Land]."[41]

Savarkar's aim in defining the terms Hindutva and Hindu is very political—to persuade Hindus to believe that that if they gather under the banner of Hindutva and create a state composed only of people of one race, one nationality, and one civilization, they will become a great world power. He believes that Hindutva would resolve the internal caste differences between Hindus, and between the upper castes and the Dalits. Even more incredibly, he believed that Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, and even the Adivasis would allow themselves to be regarded as Hindus.

Finally, Savarkar wanted to make civilization an instrument of military power. He glorified Shivaji precisely because he stood up to the Mughals, who were perceived as alien, almost colonial, rulers. Military resistance to the Mughals, says, Savarka, was "Hindutva at work."[42] As the president of the Hindu Maha Sabha he gave Hindus a new mantra: "Hinduize all politics and militarize Hindudom."[43] *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* concludes with a fervent appeal to all Hindus to join together and be ready to face the world: "bound together by ties of common blood and common culture [Hindus] can dictate their terms to the whole world. A day will come when mankind will have to face the force."[44]

41. Ibid., p. 130.

42. Ibid., p. 44 ff.

43. V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements*, ed. S. S. Savarkar and G. M. Joshi (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967), p. 1.

44. Savarkar, *Hindutva*, p. 141.

Savarkar is a continuing presence in postcolonial India. He is the inspiration for several things happening in Indian politics today. To begin with, there is a civilizational standoff between right-wing elements and the rest of Indian population. Gandhi's significance is being downgraded. Savarkar's notion that those who lack Hindutva lack political legitimacy in India is echoed at the village level in contemporary India, as when we find a minister in central government referring to those who possess Hindutva as *ramzada* (children of Ram, or legitimate), and those who do not as *haramzada* (illegitimate.) The *ghar-wapsi* movement (reconversion to Hinduism) has its provenance in Savarkar's ideology of reconversion as a means of recovering Hindutva. Downgrading Christmas as "good governance day" to mark the birthday of a former Indian prime minister has a definite Hindutva tone. These are signs of the alliance between political power and Hindutva civilization.

## CONCLUSION

We began with the hypothesis that civilizations clash when aligned with political and military power. We have seen how the politics of both Jinnah and Savarkar verify our hypothesis. At the same time, we see that the state in Gandhi's political philosophy remains neutral toward civilization as political ideology. It uses political power only for internal order and external security—never for advancing a particular brand of civilization. This is in line with his concept of civilization as a mode of good conduct guided by self-knowledge and a sense of duty, and by the respect for the rights of others.

Decoupling civilization and military power is a recent historical development. And Gandhi can be regarded as a pioneer in this development. Pax Gandhiana maintains that justice and stability in international relations require a strict separation of civilizations and political and military power.

8

# Arts and Gandhi's Political Philosophy

That Gandhi has a deep and sustained interest in the arts should come as no surprise, given the conceptual framework of his political philosophy.[1] Art and aesthetics belong to the sphere of kama, broadly understood.[2] In Gandhi's political philosophy, the pleasure that art gives contributes to the perfection of political life.

Gandhi has a profound understanding of the meaning and the power of symbols as means of communication. It is no exaggeration to say that he has a sacramental view of the world: Gestures can convey subtle messages, and artifacts like the spinning wheel can convey meanings that

1. This is a revised version of an essay that first appeared in *Mahatma Gandhi 125 Years*, ed. B. R. Nanda (New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1995), pp. 225–49.

2. Arvind Sharma, *The Purusharthas: A Study of Hindu Axiology* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1982), p. 40.

transcend their materiality. As Nirmal Kumar Bose, his secretary during the Bengal tours of the 1940s notes, he "knew that mankind thirsted for symbolism."[3] E. M. Forster put it pithily: "He is with the great artists, though art was not his medium."[4]

Early glimpses of Gandhi's interest in the arts can be found in his writings in *Indian Opinion*, and his letters to friends. During his 1902 visit to Jaipur he took time to visit the art museum there: "Jeypore is a wonderful place," he noted. "The Albert Museum is a far better building than the Calcutta one and the art section is by itself a study. The Jeypore School of arts appeared to be flourishing under its Bengalee Superintendent."[5] *Indian Opinion* of September 17, 1903, carried an article on Indian art. It noted that the Maharaja of Mysore was "bent on encouraging Indian art, and on reviving it in a most practical form." The article quotes a lengthy passage from Sir W. W. Hunter's description of Indian art and architecture as found in his book *Indian Empire. Indian Opinion* of March 26, 1910, carried a review article of E. B. Havell's *Art Administration in India*. The April 16, 1910, issue of the same weekly had a report on a "Mohamedan Art Exhibition" in Munich; and the issue of June 18, 1910, contained a summary of E. B. Havell's lecture on "Something to be Learnt from Indian Art," delivered to the Society of Arts, London.

Gandhi read A. K. Coomaraswamy's *Essays on National Idealism* in 1909, the year it appeared. Art, the author argues, contains in itself the deepest principle of life, the truest guide to the greatest art, the art of living. His chapters on Indian music finds much favor with Gandhi, who recommends the book for "serious study" to his colleagues and friends in South Africa and India.[6] He had a sustained interest in the writings of other major literary figures also. For example, in 1910 he urged Maganlal

3. Nirmal Kumar Bose, *My Days with Gandhi* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1953), p. 141.

4. E. M. Forster, "Mahatma Gandhi," in *Mahatma Gandhi: Reflections on His Life and Work*, ed. S. Radhakrishnan (Bombay: Jaico, 1995), p. 315.

5. *CW*, 3, p. 273.

6. *CW*, 10, p. 356, and *CW*, 14, p. 30.

Gandhi to read Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. He reminds him the following year: "Please read *Gulliver's Travels* sometime if you have not already done so." A few weeks later, he gives the reason why he should do so: because it contains "so effective a condemnation, in an ironic vein, of modern civilization." The work deserves to be read "again and again. Besides, there is its great artistry: "Children can read it with enjoyment, so simple it is; and the wise ones get dizzy trying to comprehend its hidden significance."[7] Years later Gandhi refers to Swift in a 1927 letter in which he advises a Gujarati writer to try irony as a literary device: "If you follow *Gulliver's Travels* and conceive an imaginary country in which to apply your correctives, you could say all that you have said."[8]

## TOLSTOY

Gandhi acquired his interest in the arts during his stay in England and South Africa. Most of his basic reading on the subject was done during this period. It brought him into contact with Tolstoy, Ruskin, Tagore, and Romain Rolland. Of these, Tolstoy had the greatest influence on him. Appendix I of *Hind Swaraj* recommends six of Tolstoy's works for further study. *What Is Art?* is the most important of these, with *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* a close second. Written in 1898, it was a trenchant critique of the "art for art's sake" ideology, propounded in the nineteenth century by aesthetes and decadents. Nietzsche and Oscar Wilde, among others, come in for severe criticism.

*What Is Art?* had a lasting impact on Gandhi, so much that he arranged for it to be translated into Gujarati. "If you translate Tolstoy's *What Is Art?* for publication and read the proofs you will get Rs. 100," he writes to his favorite translator, Valji Desai. "The work . . . will go on for two months at the rate of four hours a day." And the translation was of course done.[9]

7. *CW*, 10, p. 357; *CW*, 11, pp. 20, 27.

8. *CW*, 33, p. 207.

9. Letter of Gandhi to V. Desai, January 24, 1916, *CW*, Supplementary Volume 1, p. 103.

In 1927, Gandhi urged his daughter-in-law, Sushila, to read Tolstoy on art: Art transcends national boundaries. Lovers of art tend to take a superficial view of art and use it as a cover for many weaknesses.

> We should, therefore, examine what we mean by art. Not everything which appeals to the eye is art. What is accepted as art by many experts may not be art. I have read conflicting opinions about many paintings and statues expressed by art-critics who have become famous in the world. We should, therefore, think what art means. The book *What Is Art?* has been translated. Sushila should read it. If you cannot get it there [South Africa] please write to me.[10]

Gandhi accepts most of Tolstoy on art, beginning with his definition of art.

Art for Tolstoy is not a source of sensuous pleasure isolated from the rest of life's concerns. Instead, argues Tolstoy, it is "an organ of life."[11] The indispensability of art for the proper conduct of life invalidates the claims of those who see art as autonomous and independent of the social conditions under which it operates. Art is as indispensable to life as speech: Speech communicates thought, art communicates feelings. Tolstoy has both a broad and a narrow conception of art. In the broad sense, art embraces everything from cradle-song, jest, mimicry, the ornamentation of houses, dress, and utensils, to church services, buildings, monuments, triumphal processions, and the like. In the narrow sense, "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them." "To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced and, having evoked it in oneself, then by means of movements, lines, colors,

10. M. K. Gandhi to Manilal and Sushila Gandhi, December 5, 1927, *CW*, 35, p. 363.

11. Leo Tolstoy, *What Is Art?*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 170, 297.

sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art."[12]

The internal criterion of art is its infectiousness: its capacity to evoke in others the same feelings which the artist has experienced himself or herself. "If a man is infected by the author's condition of soul, if he feels this emotion and this union with others, then the object which has affected this, is art; but if there is no such infection . . . then it is not art. And not only is infection a sure sign of art, but the degree of infectiousness is also the sole measure of the excellence in art."[13]

Even though art has its own internal criterion there are also external criteria by which the content or the subject matter of art can and should be evaluated. Goodness is the highest aim of life; therefore the subject matter of art should be in harmony with goodness. For Tolstoy, human life is nothing but a striving toward the good. "Goodness is really the fundamental metaphysical perception which forms the essence of our consciousness. Goodness is that which cannot be defined by anything else, but which defines everything else." Beauty in art therefore remains subordinate to goodness. Beauty "not only does not coincide with goodness, but rather is contrary to it; for the good most often coincides with victory over the passions, while beauty is at the root of all our passions. The more utterly we surrender ourselves to beauty the farther we depart from goodness."[14]

All good art is inspired by what Tolstoy calls "the religious perception of the age."[15] Religious perception does not refer to religion in the creedal or doctrinal sense, but rather to religion that reveals the true meaning of life. Normally, he writes, it is revealed by a "few advanced men" of a given religion. "And it is by the standards of this religious perception that the feelings transmitted by art have always been estimated." In our times, says

12. Ibid., p.173.

13. Ibid., p. 275.

14. Ibid., pp. 189–90.

15. Ibid., p. 278.

Tolstoy, the religious perception is "the consciousness that our well-being, both material and spiritual, individual and collective, temporal and eternal, lies in the growth of brotherhood among men—in their loving harmony with one another."[16] In former times, religious perceptions united only some people; now it seeks to unite all, without exception. Art in "our times" should therefore be appraised on the basis of whether it divides or unites humans. Anything that promotes hatred against humans cannot be the subject matter of good art. "The task for art to accomplish is to make that feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbor now attained by only the best members of society, the customary feeling and the instinct of all men": Its destiny "in our time is to transmit from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling the truth that well-being for men consists in their being united together, and to set up, in place of existing reign of force, that kingdom of God—that is, of love which we all recognize to be the highest aim of human life."[17]

Tolstoy feels that art is indispensable to a peaceful world order. He argues that in the present time, cooperation among humans is made possible largely by means of the external instruments of coercion—law, police, international organizations, and the like. This is not enough. He wants peaceful cooperation among humans to emerge freely and without coercion. Art has a crucial role to play here, namely, that of modifying our violent nature: "Art should cause violence to be set aside."[18]

Tolstoy identifies a number of obstacles standing in the way of art exercising its pacific role. The first is the high cost of art, which makes it inaccessible to ordinary people; the second is the artist's exploitation of the sexual instinct, and the accompanying commercialization of art considered as means of amusement and pleasure; the third is the exaggerated importance given to artists, as if they are superhuman—unbound by the conditions of ordinary life; the fourth is the priority given to beauty

16. Ibid., pp. 279–81.

17. Ibid., p. 332–33.

18. Ibid., p. 331.

over goodness, something for which Oscar Wilde and Nietzsche, among others, are held responsible; and the fifth is the use of art for patriotic or nationalistic purposes.

Does Tolstoy overestimate the capacity of art to set violence aside? Freud, in a famous letter to Einstein, thinks so, even though Tolstoy is not mentioned by name. It would seem, wrote Freud, "that any effort to replace brute force by the might of an ideal is, under present conditions, doomed to fail."[19] Freud of course was writing within the framework of a materialistic interpretation of life, whereas Tolstoy was writing within a spiritualistic interpretation of the same. So it is critical which interpretation of life one accepts.

There is no doubt that Gandhi, like Tolstoy and unlike Freud, accepts an inclusive understanding of the forces at work in the human psyche. For instance, he would not grant the hegemony of brute force over soul force. He would have been astonished by Freud's assumption that life does not have a plurality of legitimate ends, including spiritual liberation. Gandhi rejects that *eros* leading to death (*tanatos*) is the sovereign force guiding human life.

Gandhi agrees with Tolstoy on a number of points. He too thinks of art as an activity that evokes feelings in others—the same feelings that the artist has experienced. Here one can think of the circumstances that led to Gandhi's adoption of the loincloth. He also agrees that goodness should have priority over beauty. He would have added, however, that truth also should have priority over beauty. Similarly, Gandhi endorses Tolstoy's idea that art should help to nourish inner experience. He independently arrives at the idea that humans need inner spiritual experience: In chapter 14 of *Hind Swaraj*, he states that inner experience of spiritual swaraj is something that a truly liberated person can have. That art should have a social content, such as combating violence, is a position on which Gandhi totally agrees with Tolstoy. That art in our times springs from a religious perception of the unity of the humankind is something

19. S. Freud to A. Einstein, September 1932, from Vienna, in O. Nathan and H. Norden, eds., *Einstein on Peace* (New York: Avenel Books, 1981), p. 196.

that comes naturally to Gandhi. Finally, Gandhi's invention of original symbols such as the loincloth and the spinning wheel, his resort to public marches like the Salt March, and even his famous fasts would have delighted Tolstoy's artistic sensibilities. Let us not forget that Tolstoy was the first to see the significance of Gandhi's satyagraha movement in South Africa, something which Philip Glass's opera, *Satyagraha*, has duly noted.

A notable exception is Gandhi's stand on the state: Whereas Tolstoy is an absolute pacifist, Gandhi is a pacifist only within the limits of maintaining internal order and external security with the aid of a minimal state.

## ARTS IN RELATION TO AN INDUSTRIALIZED SOCIETY

Ruskin's *The Political Economy of Art* (1857) marks the beginning of his reflections on the place of the arts in an industrialized society. "Industry without art is brutality" is his overall position.[20] *The Political Economy of Art* is based on two lectures delivered at the Manchester Exhibition of 1857. It was reissued in 1880 under a new title, *"A Joy for Ever" (and Its Price in the Market).* The Manchester Exhibition had used the famous line from Keats, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," as its official motto. Ruskin uses it in irony, in the new title of his book.

Although Ruskin's other work, *Unto This Last* (1860) is better known to Gandhi students, *The Political Economy of Art* stands on its own and throws useful light on the function of art in modern society. Ruskin's approach here is practical not theoretical. He begins with the question of how art is produced and who produces it. It is produced by individuals who have the talent for art. Not everyone is blessed with this talent. It therefore requires nurturing and patronage. Public authorities have a responsibility to help train artists and disseminate their work to the general public.

20. Quoted in A. Coomaraswamy, *Essays in National Idealism* (Campden: 1909), p. 202, reissued in 1981 by Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi book publishers.

Political economy, or the "citizen's economy," requires the proper management of a nation's labor. When well managed, a nation's labor can provide for both "utility and splendor." Labor well managed is sufficient to provide for not only people's basic needs but also pleasant objects of luxury, healthful rest, and serviceable leisure. Poverty is not the result of some defect in human nature; it is the result of the mismanagement of a nation's labor. For Ruskin, the art of managing labor means that everybody in the nation has something useful to do. "Inactivity," not hunger, ruins nations.[21] Idleness is at the root of societal disorders. The ability to enjoy the arts presupposes a certain level of economic well-being. Extreme poverty kills the capacity for aesthetic enjoyment. It interferes with the quality of life.

For Ruskin, human labor should meet not only the physical needs of workers but also their emotional needs. This is where the arts play an important role. The fault of labor in an industrial society is that it aims to meet only the material needs. How a nation meets the material and emotional needs of its people will depend on that nation's specific circumstances. In the England of his day, blanket making had to come before lace making: "as long as there are cold and nakedness in the land around you, so long there can be no question at all but that splendor of dress is a crime. In due time, when we have nothing better to set a people to work at, it may be right to let them make lace and cut jewels; but as long as there are any who have no blankets for their beds, and no rags for their bodies, so long it is blanket-making and tailoring we must set people to work at—not lace."[22]

*The Political Economy of Art* reinforces at least two major ideas of Gandhi's political philosophy. The first is the idea that an industrializing India should learn to manage its national labor properly. Everyone in the nation should have an opportunity to engage in some kind of productive

21. John Ruskin, "A Joy for Ever," in *The Works of Ruskin*, vol. 16 (London: George Allen, 1911), p. 26.

22. Ibid., p. 59.

labor. If this is accomplished, the nation's labor will be able to provide for both "utility and splendor." The popularization of khadi and the spinning wheel—which seemed to many a mere fad, lacking in economic rationality—had a Ruskinian tone to it. It gave people who were otherwise forced to stay idle, something useful to do. Secondly, there is the need to manage India's labor in ways adapted to the needs and capabilities of India: not mass production, but production by the masses became the Gandhian mantra. The technology in question also had to be adapted to the actual capabilities of the poor. The Ruskinian principle of "blankets before lace" finds its application in Gandhi's advocacy of local village industries side by side with the highly mechanized industries. Gandhi's espousal of arts exhibition at the venue of the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress also has a Ruskinian provenance.

## ARTS AND POLITICS: THE GANDHI-TAGORE DEBATES

Three significant debates between Gandhi, the political activist, and Tagore, the poet, took place between 1921 and 1925. The context was Gandhi's launching of the noncooperation movement of 1920. Tagore found many things wanting in it. He launched the debate in March 1921 with his "Letters to a Friend."[23] Under scrutiny were Gandhi's ideas of nationalism, swaraj, and noncooperation. Nationalism, Tagore claims, is alien to India: There was (allegedly) no word for it in the Indian languages; nor does it fit India. India, true to her traditions, should stand for humanity, not nation. Swaraj, as advocated by Gandhi, seems to belong to the sphere of *maya* (philosophic illusion). Insofar as its goals are political and material, it is incompatible with India's spiritual traditions. India's fight against Great Britain should be spiritual—to emancipate "Man" from the politicotemporal meshes he had woven around him. Noncooperation represents negativity and a passive asceticism that says "No" to everything. In its active form, it represents a form of violence. It would prevent the

23. *CW*, 20, pp. 539–41.

meeting of East and West, and unnecessarily hurt and eventually destroy love, the "ultimate truth of the soul."

Gandhi replied with an article titled "The Poet's Anxiety."[24] Drawing on the Upanishadic doctrine of *Neti* ("not this"), Gandhi argues that the rejection of a thing is as much an ideal as its acceptance. It is as necessary to reject untruth as it is to accept truth. "Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as co-operation with good." The Poet, therefore, had been "unnecessarily alarmed at the negative aspect of non-cooperation." Moreover, colonial India had lost the ability to say "No" to the colonial power. "Non-cooperation was the nation's notice that it was no longer satisfied to be in tutelage." And if India was ever to attain the swaraj of the Poet's dream, she could do so only on the basis of nonviolent noncooperation. Noncooperation sends a "message of peace and good-will" to a groaning world. It is designed to supply India with a platform from which to preach that message.

The second debate started late in 1921 with Tagore's article titled "The Call to Truth."[25] Seen from his aesthetic perspective, Gandhi's leadership role in politics seemed problematic. He appeared like a guru reinforcing the atavistic tendencies of blind obedience and the abdication of reason. A New Age was dawning on the world—an age of creativity, individual freedom, and universal amity. Gandhi appeared to be out of step. He seemed to want to take India back to the days of guru-worship and "self-atrophy." Gandhi's stand on the charkha and weaving was unacceptable. "To one and all he simply says: Spin and weave, spin and weave." This is hardly the call suitable for the New Age. Why should everyone spin? And how can swaraj be won by spinning? What is the proof? "Where then, I ask again, is the argument that in our country swaraj can be brought about by everyone engaging for a time in spinning?" If big machines stunt human growth, so can small machines, like the charkha. Indians have

24. Ibid., pp. 161–64. What follows in this paragraph is a summary of Gandhi's reply.

25. For the text see William Theodore de Bary, ed., *The Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 792–97.

taken to the charkha simply on Gandhi's authority—and blind authority even to so great a man as Gandhi can only lead to regression. It will only reinforce the traditional "illusion-haunted, magic-ridden, slave mentality" of the past. "The charkha in its proper place can do no harm, but will rather do much good. But where, by reason of failure to acknowledge the differences in man's temperament, it is in the wrong place, there thread can only be spun at the cost of a great deal of the mind itself. Mind is no less valuable than cotton thread."[26]

Tagore insists that creativity and individuality must be awakened if swaraj is to be meaningful. In a passage that caught Gandhi's special attention, Tagore writes: "when the bird is roused by the dawn, all its awakening is not absorbed in its search for food. Its wings respond unweariedly to the call of the sky, its throat pours forth songs for joy of the new light."[27]

Gandhi's reply, titled "The Great Sentinel," is one of the most spirited short pieces that he ever wrote. "True to his poetical instinct, the Poet lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds had their day's food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood had flown during the previous night." [28] Sustaining the metaphor of birds, Gandhi now delivers a decisive blow:

> But I have had the pain of watching birds who for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. It is an indescribably painful state which has to be experienced to be realized. I have found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem, food.

26. Ibid., p. 794.

27. Ibid., pp. 796–97.

28. *CW*, 21, pp. 287–91, at p. 291.

> They cannot be given it. They must earn it. And they can earn only by the sweat of their brow.[29]

Gandhi's point is that at the root of India's woes lies the mismanagement of India's labor. Besides, there is no emotional bond between the city-dwelling rich Indians and the village-dwelling poor, underemployed Indians. Gandhi reminded Tagore that the vast majority of Indians who live in villages suffer from hunger because they have no work, and without work, no income with which to buy food. India lives in her villages, and the cities live on the villages. And the city people act as brokers and commission agents for the big business houses of Europe, America, and Japan. They have little concern for India's poor. As a result, India is bleeding economically. "The circulation about her feet and legs has almost stopped. And if we do not care, she will collapse altogether."[30] For the "famishing and the idle" the only acceptable form in which God could dare appear is work, wages, and food. The spinning wheel represents work, wages, and food accessible to even the illiterate. "Hunger is the argument that is driving India to the spinning-wheel." It is the "reviving draught."[31] Gandhi connects the idea of sacramental work to spinning. He cannot imagine anything "nobler or more national" than rich Indians spinning the wheel for one hour a day to show their solidarity with the poor. He cannot imagine a better worship of God than this. "I do indeed ask the Poet and the page to spin the wheel as a sacrament. . . . The plea for the spinning wheel is a plea for recognizing the dignity of labor."[32]

The irony is that it became the duty of the activist Gandhi to explain the symbolism of the charkha to the poet Tagore. The charkha for Gandhi was a symbol of many things—of the dignity of labor, of the necessity of labor for the idle and the unemployed, of the expiatory labor due from

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., pp. 288–89.

31. Ibid., p. 289.

32. Ibid., pp. 288–89.

India's rich, of the need for solidarity with the poor. It seems to Gandhi that Tagore's art had become removed from the vital concerns and the sufferings of the people around him.

In 1925 Tagore returned to the debate, this time with the article "The Cult of the Charkha."[33] The use of the charkha represented monotonous work, dulling the mind and sapping the creativity of those who used it. It embodied the worst in mechanical labor. For Tagore abstention from the charkha had become a matter of conscience: He could no longer be a "follower of the charkha cult." Gandhi was giving the charkha a higher place than was its due in the scheme of national reconstruction.

Gandhi replied with the article "The Poet and the Charkha." He generously denies the rumor that jealousy was at the root of Tagore's continued argument with Gandhi. As Gandhi sees it, the debate had little to do with personality issues, but it had everything to do with poetry and action. Poetry creates its own tools, whereas action uses tools made by others. The poet lives in a magnificent world of his own creation. The activist (Gandhi) lives in a world of somebody else's creation—in this case that of the spinning wheel. "The Poet is an inventor—he creates, destroys and recreates." He (Gandhi) by contrast, is an "explorer" who discovers the practical uses of existing things. The Poet presents the world with "new things," he (Gandhi) "merely shows the hidden possibilities of old and even worn-out things."[34]

Gandhi took no offense at Tagore's comments, which he considered to be an instance of an artist using poetic license. "Painters and poets are obliged to exaggerate the proportions of their figures in order to give a perspective." The truth of the matter was that he (Gandhi) had not asked "everybody to spin the whole of his or her time to the exclusion of all other activity." As Gandhi assured Tagore, he does not want the poet to forsake his muse, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief and the doctor his lancet. The charkha must be used by everyone but in a way appropriate

33. *CW*, 28, p. 482–84.

34. Ibid., p. 426.

to his or her life situation: "the famishing and the idle" should spin for a living; the half-starved were to spin only to supplement their income; while the rich and well-off should spin thirty minutes daily—"to adorn" their life and as a sign of solidarity and penance. He invites the Poet himself to spin half an hour daily: If he does so, observed Gandhi slyly, "his poetry would gain in richness. For it would then represent the poor man's wants and woes in a more forcible manner than now." [35]

These debates bring into the open two different views of art and political action. Gandhi represented the view that good art is at once inspirational and communicative and compatible with appropriate action, while Tagore represents the view that art is primarily self-expressive, contemplative, and apolitical. In the end, however, Gandhi and Tagore patched up their differences. Tagore wrote the following expressing his admiration and appreciation of the Mahatma: "I have since learnt to understand him as I would understand an artist—not by the theories and fantasies of the creed he may profess, but by the expression in his practice which gives evidence to the uniqueness of his mind."[36]

## ART THEORY: THE RAMACHANDRAN INTERVIEW

In 1924 Gandhi gave an important interview to G. Ramachandran, an art student from Tagore's "university"—the Shantiniketan. It covered a wide range of topics: Gandhi's perceived indifference to art, the relationship of art to truth, beauty, and morality, his estimate of Oscar Wilde, and the reason why he did not write on art.[37]

The first question put Gandhi on the spot. "How is it that many intelligent and eminent men who love and admire you, hold that you consciously or unconsciously have ruled out of the scheme of national regeneration all consideration of Art?" Gandhi replied that it was more

35. Ibid., p. 427.

36. Tagore, *The Sunday Statesman* (Calcutta), February 13, 1938.

37. *CW*, 25, p. 247–50.

a matter of perception than reality. Distinguishing between inward and outward aspects of art, he said he was more concerned with the former than the latter. "The outward has no meaning except in so far it helps the inward. All true Art is thus an expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only in so far as they are expressions of the inner spirit of man." [38] He agreed that true art expresses the urge and unrest in the soul in terms of words, colors, and shapes. Art of this sort had "the greatest appeal" to him. "I can claim, therefore, that there is truly sufficient Art in my life, though you may not see what you call works of Art about me. My room may have blank walls. . . . This, however, does not mean that I refuse to accept the value of productions of Art, generally accepted as such, but only that I personally feel how inadequate these are compared with the eternal symbols of beauty in Nature. These productions of man's Art have their value only in so far as they help the soul onward towards self-realization." [39]

Gandhi was then questioned about the relationship of art, beauty, and truth. He does not agree that beauty has priority over truth. There is "no Beauty apart from Truth." "Whenever men begin to see Beauty in Truth, then true Art will arise." By beauty Gandhi does not mean physical beauty resulting from the harmony of the parts and the whole. Truth may manifest itself "in forms which may not be outwardly beautiful at all." He uses the story of Socrates and Phidias, the Athenian sculptor, to illustrate the point. Socrates was the most truthful man of his time, yet his features were said to have been "the ugliest in Greece." But this did not prevent Phidias, accustomed to seeing beauty in outward forms, "from appreciating the beauty of Truth in him."[40]

In answer to the question, how are the most beautiful things often created by men "whose own lives were not beautiful?" Gandhi replies that "Truth and untruth often co-exist. "In an artist also not seldom the right

38. Ibid., p. 248.

39. Ibid., p. 249.

40. Ibid., pp. 249–50.

perception of things and the wrong co-exist. Truly beautiful creations come when right perception is at work. If these moments are rare in life they are also rare in Art."[41]

Gandhi is quite aware that many who call themselves artists, and are recognized as such, do not show any trace of the soul's "upward urge and unrest." To illustrate this point Gandhi brought in Oscar Wilde: "I can speak of him, as I was in England at the time that he was being much discussed and talked about." The problem with Wilde, Gandhi asserts, was that he succeeded in "beautifying immorality."[42]

Four of Wilde's works appeared during Gandhi's stay in England, 1888–1891: *The Decay of Lying* (1889), *Critic as Artist* (1890), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), and *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1891). It is possible that Gandhi might have read one or more of these works. In any case, his comment that Wilde was "beautifying immorality" likely reflected Wilde's opinion expressed in the Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style."[43] Or, the following in *The Critic as Artist*:

> All art is immoral . . . emotion for the sake of emotion is the aim of art, and emotion for the sake of action is the aim of life, and that of practical organization of life that we call society. Society, which is the beginning and basis of morals, exists simply for the concentration of human energy, and in order to ensure its own continuance and healthy stability it demands, and no doubt rightly demands, of each of its citizens that he should contribute some productive labor to the common wealth, and toil and travail that the day's work may be done. Society often forgives the criminal; it never forgives the dreamer.[44]

41. Ibid., p. 250.

42. Ibid., p. 248.

43. Isobel Murray, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 48.

44. Ibid., p. 274.

For Wilde,

> Aesthetics is higher than ethics. They belong to a more spiritual sphere. To discern the beauty of a thing is the finest point to which we can arrive. Aesthetics, in fact, are to Ethics in the sphere of conscious civilization, what, in the sphere of the external world, sexual is to natural selection. Ethics, like natural selection, make existence possible. Aesthetics, like sexual selection, make life lovely and wonderful, fill it with new forms and give it progress, and variety and change. And when we reach the true culture that is our aim, we attain to that perfection of which the saints have dreamed, the perfection of those to whom sin is impossible, not because they make the renunciations of the ascetic, but because they can do everything they wish without hurt to the soul, and can wish for nothing that can do the soul harm, the soul being an entity so divine that it is able to transform into elements of richer experience, or a finer susceptibility, or a newer mode of thought, acts or passions that with the common would be commonplace, or with the uneducated ignoble, or with the shameful vile.[45]

Gandhi's negative stand on Wilde might have been reinforced by Tolstoy's criticism in *What Is Art?*: "The Decadents, and aesthetes of the type one time represented by Oscar Wilde, select as a theme for their productions the denial of morality and the laudation of vice."[46]

Perhaps Ramachandran's last question was the most interesting: why Gandhi did not write on art. "Would it not be well for you to put them [ideas on Art] down for the benefit of the younger generation in order to guide them aright?" The following was Gandhi's Socratic reply: "That I could never dream of doing, for the simple reason that it would be an impertinence on my part to hold forth on Art. I am not an art student,

45. Ibid., pp. 295–96.

46. Tolstoy, *What Is Art?*, p. 303.

though these are my fundamental convictions. I do not speak or write about it, because I am conscious of my own limitations. . . . My functions are different from the artist's and I should not go out of my way to assume his position." [47]

## ART THEORY: GANDHI–ROMAIN ROLLAND DIALOGUE

Perhaps Gandhi articulates his most carefully considered opinion on art and aesthetics in his dialogue with Romain Rolland, Nobel laureate and one of Gandhi's early biographers. The dialogue took place in Rolland's villa in Geneva in 1931. It began with Rolland giving a brief account of his own position on art and aesthetics. Art for him is the source of joy, which in turn was the product of beauty. Joy and beauty have priority over truth because he could more readily find joy in beauty than in truth, which often was hurtful and disruptive. Rolland acknowledges that he stood in opposition to Tolstoy.

> Great art has harmony as its essence, and it brings peace, health and equilibrium to the soul. It communicates them at once by the senses and by the mind for both senses and mind have the right to joy. Beauty manifests itself in many ways; beauty of line, beauty of sound, beauty of colors etc., and at the bottom of them all, the inner order, the hidden harmony, which is in essence moral. The troubles of the soul are filtered and sublimated through it.[48]

Rolland's brief exposition was meant to remove misconceptions about Gandhi's "asceticism" and his alleged indifference to beauty. "All this exposé," Rolland says, had an unexpected double aim: "to fight against the notion attributed to Gandhi that suffering is pleasing to God and to

47. *CW*, 25, p. 250.

48. Rolland Romain, *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1976), p. 208.

assert the rights, which he seems sometimes to neglect, of beauty and the natural and exalting love which healthy men have for her."[49]

Gandhi's response is brief and unambiguous: For him truth has priority over joy and beauty. "For me, the definition of truth is a universal one. The truth is made manifest in many ways. Any art which is inconsistent with truth, which is not linked to truth, is not art. I would not classify art as a thing distinct from truth. I am against the formula 'art for art's sake'; for me art must be based on truth, I reject beautiful things which pass for art if they express non-truth instead of truth. I would subscribe to the formula: 'Art brings joy and is good'—but on the condition I have stated. By truth in art I do not mean the exact reproduction of exterior objects; it is the living object which brings living joy to the soul and which must elevate the soul. If a work does not achieve this, it is worthless. If truth does not bring joy, it is because truth is not in you." He then speaks briefly on (an unnamed) Hindu religious morning-song, and commented on the formula *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, which asserted the priority of truth (*Sat*) over knowledge (*Chit*) and joy (*Ananda*). Though joy was inseparable from truth, the attainment of truth often involved suffering: "One must suffer in the search for truth; one must undergo disappointments, fatigues and afflictions without number; but despite everything you draw joy and felicity form it."[50]

The conversation then moves on to a discussion of the art of Goethe and the music of Beethoven. Gandhi agrees with Goethe's two dicta, read to him by Rolland: "I prefer the harmful truth to the useful error: the truth cures the pain that it may cause us" and "All laws and all moral rules can be reduced to one single truth."[51]

As for Beethoven's music, Rolland did play the Fifth Symphony and explained the music to him, and asked for his reaction: It did not make much of an impression on him. As Rolland noted in his Diary, Gandhi replied with "a mischievous and candid little laugh: 'It must be good, since you say so!' "[52]

49. Ibid., p. 209.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., p. 210.

52. Ibid., p. 212.

The dialogue with Rolland is remarkable in at least two respects. First, it shows, once again, that Gandhi is closer to the Tolstoyan/Ruskinian view of art and aesthetics than he is to the Wilde/Rolland view of the same. Second, it shows that the "religious" element in art, whether Western or Eastern art, is very appealing to him. Thus while the Fifth Symphony did not make a great impression on Gandhi even with Rolland's commentary, Cardinal Newman's poem, "Lead Kindly Light," set to music, always produced in Gandhi a deep aesthetic response.[53]

The same is true of Gandhi's contrasting reactions to the secular and religious visual arts he saw in the Vatican. Michelangelo's frescoes, for example, did not have the same impact on him as a medieval crucifix in the Vatican collection.[54] Mira Behn described the scene as follows: "In the Vatican Bapu's eyes fell on a very striking life size crucifix. He immediately went up to it and stood there in deep contemplation. Then he moved a little this way, and that way, so as to see it from various angles, and finally went around behind it and the wall, where there was hardly room to go, and looked up from the back. He remained perfectly silent, and it was only when he left that he spoke, and then as still in contemplation—'That was a very wonderful crucifix'—and again silence. So deep an impression did that scene make on me that it stands out all alone in my mind, and I remember nothing else of the visit to the Vatican."[55]

53. *CW*, 44, p. 386.

54. Ibid., p. 254–55.

55. M. Slade (Mira Behn), *The Spirit's Pilgrimage* (New York, Coward-McCann, 1960), pp. 150–51. Gandhi wrote the following to his disciple Prema Kantak in India: "I very much enjoyed seeing the paintings in Rome, but what opinion can I give after a visit of two hours? What is my competence to judge? I could spend two or three months there. I would go and see the paintings and sculptures every day and study them attentively. I saw the sculpture of Jesus on the Cross. I have written and told you that it was this that attracted me the most." Gandhi to Kantak, January 25, 1932, *CW*, 49, p. 37. In a presidential address to the Gujarati Literature Society, he said the following: "Though I was happy and proud to see what I saw in the exhibition this morning, and felt that I had not seen anything of the kind in Gujarat, let me tell you that I missed what I would call a painting that speaks. Why should I need an artist to explain a work of art? I saw in the Vatican art collection a statue of Christ on the Cross which simply captured me and kept me spell bound, I saw it five years ago but it is still before me. There was no one there to explain its charm to me." *CW*, 63, p. 416.

The relationship between art and religion was the main theme of an important interview that Gandhi gave to Joseph Bard (Josef Diamant, 1892–1975), a Hungarian of Jewish descent, settled in England. The interview was published in *The Island*, a quarterly edited by Bard. "Religion is the proper and eternal ally of art." The two have a "profound similarity" inasmuch as "the fundamental experience" of both is man's relationship to God. They serve "the identical aims of moral and spiritual elevation." "The central experience of life," Gandhi affirms, "will for ever remain the relationship which man has to God and it will never be superseded or replaced by anything else, just as human bodies will never free themselves from the law of gravitation." In this relationship it is the "mysterious forces" that matter, not the letter of the text. Such art gives guidance, hope and faith in immortality, and optimism, instead of the sense that life ultimately is a tragedy.[56]

The interview touched on art and unbelief in our times. If an artist chooses to be a "scoffer" of religious belief, "he will inevitably betray his vocation." If, on the other hand, he feels that he has a mission to go against the current, then he has "a right to oppose prevalent creed or lack of creed and he will be justified by the greater value of his own revelation." There are different modes of the relationship of man to God which different religions articulate. But whatever the mode, it helps humans to get out of the "encircling gloom," step by step. The interview ended with a reference to Cardinal Newman's poem, "Lead, Kindly Light." [57]

## GANDHI'S PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ARTS

A brief reference to the contributions that Gandhi made to the development of public interest in art and aesthetics becomes necessary here. He had a lifelong interest in religious music, which he regards as a means to

56. *CW*, 48, pp. 149–50.

57. Ibid.

spiritual development. He encourages those who have the talent to take music as a career. One of the first things that he did upon establishing the Sabarmati Ashram in 1915 was to appoint Pundit Narayan Khare as music teacher. Training in music became part of the Ashram curriculum. Under Khare's leadership music education was introduced in the region of Gujarat. With Khare's assistance Gandhi compiled the *Ashram Hymnal*—a collection of 253 hymns collected from different parts of India—a major achievement. In 1930 he himself translated every one of these hymns into English. In 1934 John S. Hoyland published a British edition of the *Hymnal*.[58]

In 1922 Gandhi took the initiative of organizing the first All-India Music festival in which musicians from all parts of India participated. One of its objectives was to popularize music in the country as a whole. The music festival coincided with the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress held in Ahmedabad. Gandhi was also instrumental in organizing an arts and crafts exhibition held at the Congress venue. At his request well-known artists such as Nandalal Bose came to be involved in these activities. As he tells us, "no less than forty thousand visited the exhibition daily."[59] Since 1922, holding a music festival and an arts and crafts exhibition at the same venue that the Indian National Congress met had become a Gandhian tradition.

As late as 1946, we see Gandhi giving detailed instructions on how the arts and crafts exhibition should be organized. Special attention was given to villages and village crafts. "The exhibition had a pedagogic function. It should be interesting to the villager; seeing it should inspire the villager to learn some craft or other. There should be people to explain to the villagers the shortcomings of the villages in general and how to remedy them. . . . There should also be someone to instruct the villagers in the ways in which village life can be made artistic." [60]

58. For the text of the Hymnal see *CW*, 44, pp. 386–466.

59. *CW*, 22, p. 132.

60. *CW*, 85, pp. 236–37.

Gandhi scholarship presents a puzzle: On the one hand there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that Gandhi is really interested in the arts. On the other hand, there is a deafening silence on the part of virtually all Gandhi scholars, including Raghavan Iyer and Joan Bondurant on the subject. Those who take note of Gandhi and the arts, like Lord Parekh, do so to point out the limitations of his political philosophy. Parekh blames his "moralistic vision," and "single-minded view of life" for the neglect of the arts. "For Gandhi the care of the soul was a full-time job requiring undivided attention, and the arts and sciences were relevant only to the extent that they promoted that supreme goal."[61] Partha Mitter's massive volume has just part of a sentence on Gandhi on art: "in Gandhi's program there was no room for art with the possible exception of Nandalal Bose's decoration of the Haripura Congress venue, done at Gandhi's behest." [62]

We hope we have given enough evidence to help solve this puzzle. Gandhi's conceptual framework has enough room for art and related issues. His views on the arts give added depth to his political philosophy.

There is a minor drawback to Gandhi's position on art. He used very little of the Indian sources. True, his dialogue with Romain Rolland does refer to Indian aesthetic theory. A brief reference to Indian art is made in the interview with Joseph Bard. He had of course read A. K. Coomaraswamy on Indian art, as we saw above. In the interview with Ramachandran, as we noted, he chose not to write a treatise on art out of humility. Had he chosen to write a treatise, he would most certainly have given sufficient attention to Indian sources.

61. B. Parekh, *Gandhi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 99–100.

62. Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 379.

9

# Gandhi and Thoreau

Thoreau played a significant role in Mahatma Gandhi's intellectual life, from 1907 to about 1920.[1] He was one of five thinkers who had a lasting impact on Gandhi. Writing to a disciple in 1931, Gandhi stated: " 'Hero' means one worthy of reverence, a god, so to say. In the political field, Gokhale [1866–1915] holds that place for me. The persons who have influenced my life, as a whole and in a general way, are Tolstoy [1828–1910], Ruskin [1819–1900], Thoreau [1817–1862] and Rajchandbhai [1868–1901]."[2] He first read Thoreau in 1907 in South Africa, when an unidentified friend sent him a copy of "The Duty of Civil Disobedience."[3]

1. This essay, which appeared originally in *A Political Companion to Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Jack Turner (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), is published here with permission.

2. *CW*, 45, p. 95. Gandhi's letter to Premabehn Kantak, January 17, 1931.

3. Thoreau's essay is traditionally known as "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" or "Civil Disobedience." Gandhi idiosyncratically referred to it as "The Duty of Civil Disobedience."

He found the essay "to be so convincing and truthful" that he began to read more of Thoreau. His early readings included *Walden* and Henry S. Salt's biography of Thoreau.[4] In September 1907 Gandhi published a paraphrase of "The Duty of Civil Disobedience" in a two-part series in his Durban weekly newspaper, *Indian Opinion*; it was later published as a pamphlet.[5] Thoreau was, for him, the model par excellence for the early practitioners of satyagraha. He exhorted his followers to resist unjust laws to the last and be "so many Thoreaus in miniature."[6] In particular, they were to imitate his sincerity and sense of commitment. "The great Thoreau said that one sincere man is more than a hundred thousand insincere men. We want to know how many of us are sincere."[7] Likewise, "The great Thoreau has said that a worthy cause should not be deemed lost, that it is bound to triumph, so long as there is at least one sincere man to fight for it."[8]

In November 1907 Gandhi put Thoreau on the reading list he had prepared to guide those entering an essay competition on the topic "The Ethics of Passive Resistance." "It [the essay] should contain an examination of Thoreau's classic, "The Duty of Civil Disobedience," Tolstoy's works—more especially *The Kingdom of Heaven Is Within You*—and it should give Biblical and other religious authorities and illustrations; and also the application of the *Apology of Socrates* to the question. The essay should give illustrations from modern history in support of the doctrine."[9] In 1908, during his incarceration in South Africa, Gandhi read "the essays of the great Thoreau," and he saw his own imprisonment as a

4. On October 12, 1929, Gandhi wrote to Henry S. Salt, Thoreau's biographer, the following: "My first introduction to Thoreau's writings was I think in 1907 or later when I was in the thick of passive resistance struggle. A friend sent me Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience. It left a deep impression upon me." *CW*, 41, p. 553.

5. *CW*, 7, pp. 217–18, 228–30.

6. Ibid., p. 267.

7. *CW*, 9, p. 159.

8. *CW*, 10, p. 386.

9. *CW*, 7, p. 510. The prize was ten guineas.

verification of Thoreau's dictum that in a tyrannical state, jail is the only place for a just man.[10]

In March 1910 he paid Thoreau a high compliment by mentioning him in the preface to the English translation of *Hind Swaraj*, his fundamental work. "Whilst the views expressed in *Hind Swaraj* are held by me, I have but endeavored humbly to follow Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Emerson and other writers, besides the masters of Indian philosophy."[11] In addition, two of Thoreau's works, "The Duty of Civil Disobedience" and "Life without Principle," were included in the famous appendix 1 of *Hind Swaraj*. It contained a list of twenty works—six by Tolstoy, two by Ruskin, and one each by Plato and Mazzini. The readers of *Hind Swaraj* were advised to study these twenty works if they wanted to gain a deeper understanding of its philosophy. Ever since, Thoreau has remained a permanent part of the broader field of Gandhi studies. In 1911 Gandhi urged Maganlal Gandhi, his deputy at Phoenix Ashram near Durban, to read Salt's biography of Thoreau.[12] He further urged him "to copy out a sentence from Thoreau occasionally" and publish it in *Indian Opinion*.[13] In 1915, the year Gandhi returned to India permanently, he took Thoreau with him. Throughout 1916, we are told, "The Duty of Civil Disobedience" was read every evening in Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad.[14] By 1919 "The Duty of Civil Disobedience" was on a new reading list he had prepared for his followers in India—a list that included works by Plato (*The Apology*), Ruskin, and Tolstoy as well. However, Thoreau was singled out for special treatment: in March 1919 Gandhi published *Satyagraha Leaflet No. 1*, titled "Extracts from 'The Duty of Civil Disobedience,' by Henry Thoreau, Schoolmaster of Massachusetts, dated 1849."[15] All those involved in the

10. *CW*, 9, p. 183.

11. M. K. Gandhi, *HS*, p. 6.

12. *CW*, 10, p. 446.

13. *CW*, 11, p. 123.

14. Indulal Yagnik, *Gandhi as I Knew Him* (Delhi: Danish Mahal, 1943), p. 16.

15. *CW*, 15, pp. 497–502. There were twenty-one such leaflets in all, and this collection of extracts from Thoreau was given the singular honor of being the first in the series.

new Gandhian movement in India were expected to read this Thoreau digest—about one-quarter of the original text.

Although his interest in Thoreau was focused on "The Duty of Civil Disobedience," it was not limited to it. As noted earlier, "Life without Principle" was honored by its inclusion among the twenty works in appendix 1 of *Hind Swaraj*. And Thoreau's essay "Walking" came up for interesting comments in some of his other writings.

In this chapter I give a brief account of Gandhi's interest in these three writings, followed by an assessment of Thoreau's impact on his thought. I conclude with comments on the broader implications of the Gandhi–Thoreau encounter for political philosophy in general and comparative political philosophy in particular.

## "WALKING"

According to Robert Richardson, "Walking" is Thoreau's "central essay," just as *Walden* is his "central book."[16] Walking, for Thoreau, is more than just a physical activity. It is a means of experiencing "wildness" or "absolute freedom," contrasted with "freedom and culture merely civil." The opening lines of the essay make this point clear: "I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil—to regard man as an inhabitant, or part and parcel of Nature, rather than member of society."[17] Man the walker, not the rider, is the authentic representative of Thoreauvian humanity. The walker constitutes "the fourth estate, outside of the Church and State and People."[18] It is only when we get away from the institutions of society and retreat into our inner self that we experience true freedom. Not only

16. Robert D. RichardsonJr., *Henry Thoreau: A Life of the Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 224.

17. Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," in *The Portable Thoreau*, rev. ed., ed. Carl Bode (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 592.

18. Ibid., p. 594.

are absolute freedom and civil freedom put in oppositional terms but also the importance of the political seems to be downgraded. Politics, he remarks, is "but as the cigar smoke of a man."[19] "Life consists with wildness. The most alive is the wildest."[20] And "all good things are wild and free."[21] There is something "servile," he writes, "in seeking after a law which we may obey." Although there is no harm in studying such laws, "a successful life knows no law." In support of this view, he invokes the Advaita doctrine of absolute freedom as treated in the Vishnu Purana: "That is active duty . . . which is not for our bondage; that is knowledge which is for our liberation: all other duty is good only unto weariness; all other knowledge is only cleverness of an artist."[22]

Although Gandhi found this essay "highly thought-provoking,"[23] on closer inspection, it appears he had a different conception of what walking means. He was, of course, a famous walker—as demonstrated by the 241-mile Salt March of 1930. His walking staff has become as integral to his public image as his loincloth. First of all, he looked on walking as a means of maintaining physical health: walking is, as he put it, "the prince of exercises."[24] He believed there existed a link between the habit of taking long walks and that of producing excellent writing. He invoked Thoreau's authority to support his belief: "According to him the writings of one who refuses to leave his house on the excuse of lack of time and who undertakes no physical activity, are bound to be anemic like himself. Speaking of his own experience, he says that when he wrote his best books he was doing his longest walking. He thought nothing of walking four or five hours at a stretch."[25] Though walking is "the best exercise," to

19. Ibid., p. 599.

20. Ibid., p. 611.

21. Ibid., p. 618.

22. Ibid., pp. 623–24.

23. *CW*, 12, p. 24.

24. *CW*, 43, p. 169.

25. *CW*, 12, p. 24.

take advantage of it, one has to walk "six miles at a stretch in the morning and again in the evening. The walking should be done briskly, at a speed of four miles an hour. Thoreau used to walk for eight hours daily when he wrote his best book."[26] As late as 1936, Gandhi was reminding friends of Thoreau and his walks: "To appreciate all the advantages of walking you must read Thoreau."[27]

Second, Gandhi attached a religious symbolism to walking, as in pilgrimages or in the tours of itinerant religious preachers. For him, walking was a means of spiritual exercise too, of communicating and communing with people. His famous village tours to visit the poor and the oppressed were deliberately done on foot as a "spiritual act."[28] They had, he said, "the beauty and the necessity of pilgrimages." "People's hearts cannot be touched by a mad rush through space. They can be by quiet, personal, intimate contact with them."[29] By taking this view of walking, he was following the example of kindred spirits "in all climes and ages" who had experienced "the joy and beauty of traveling on foot." "All the great reformers of the world who have from time to time effected religious revolutions have eschewed the use of vehicles and walked thousands of miles for delivering their mission. Yet, by the intensity of their faith and the strength of their realization, they were able to achieve what we, in our aeroplane age, with all the gee-gaws at our command, could hardly aspire to. Not mad rush, but unperturbed calmness brings wisdom."[30] It is interesting to note that Gandhi also listed Thomas F. Taylor's *Fallacy of Speed* (1909) in the appendix to *Hind Swaraj*. Taylor questioned the wisdom of the modern tendency to regard faster as better. Like Thoreau and Gandhi, he believed that modern speed militated against leisure in considerable sections of modern communities.[31]

26. *CW*, 13, p. 270.

27. *CW*, 63, p. 94.

28. *CW*, 58, p. 2.

29. Ibid., p. 213.

30. *CW*, 59, pp. 68–69.

31. See *HS*, xliii–xliv.

## "LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE"

Several critics have commented on the important place this essay occupies in the Thoreau corpus. According to William Cain, it contains "a distilled statement" of Thoreau's beliefs.[32] Richardson calls it "the tactical obverse of *Walden*": whereas the latter tells us what to live for, this essay tells us what not to live for. It is "Thoreau's most puritanical piece," without being Calvinistic; it is an attack against "both Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism." Considered by many to be "Thoreau's best, most concentrated statement on his major message," it is the equivalent of Emerson's "Self-Reliance."[33] Len Gougeon sees "Life without Principle" as an attack on America's "restless materialism" and its impact on American culture.[34]

Gandhi's interest in this work arose from his broader interest in the question of the impact of industrial capitalism on society in general and India in particular. Of the twenty works in appendix I of *Hind Swaraj* recommended for further reading, more than half were on nineteenth-century industrial capitalism; six treated the social impact of the Industrial Revolution on Great Britain, and two on the impact of colonial capitalism on India.[35] "Life without Principle" belongs to this genre of books. It was the sole entry on the impact of nineteenth century capitalism on the United States. It was Gandhi's hope that Indians who were anxious

32. William Cain, ed., *A Historical Guide to Henry David Thoreau* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 51.

33. Richardson, *Henry Thoreau*, pp. 332–33.

34. Len Gougeon, "Thoreau and Reform," in *The Cambridge Companion to Thoreau*, ed. Joel Myerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 206.

35. The books critical of the social impact of nineteenth-century economic changes in Great Britain were *A New Crusade* (1903) by Godfrey Blount, *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure* (1897) by Edward Carpenter, *Unto This Last* (1860) and *"A Joy for Ever" and Its Price in the Market* (1857, 1880) by John Ruskin, *The White Slaves of England* (1897) by Robert H. Sherard, and *The Fallacy of Speed* (1909) by Thomas F. Taylor. The books on Indian economics were *Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India* (1901) by Dadabhai Naoroji and the two-volume *Economic History of India* (1904) by R. C. Dutt.

to embark on the path of economic development would learn from the experiences of Great Britain and the United States.

"Life without Principle," Gandhi implied, contained a timely warning for Indians. Nineteenth-century business capitalism in the United States had a questionable impact on American culture, politics, and journalism. It was promoting a philosophy of life that seemed to lack a transcendent spiritual principle. "Let us consider the way in which we spend our lives," the essay begins. "This world is a place of business. What an infinite bustle! . . . There is no Sabbath. . . . It is nothing but work, work, work." Nothing is more opposed to poetry, philosophy, and life itself, moans Thoreau, than this "incessant business."[36] It has made moneymaking the sole object of labor, depriving it of any transcending moral end. And "the ways of making money today almost without exception lead downwards." Even the intellectuals ("writers and lecturers") are no exception: they succumb to the lure of fame and popularity.[37] The California gold rush is cited as symptomatic of modern economic life. The greatest "disgrace on mankind," it has the support not only of merchants but also of "philosophers and prophets, so called." It turns making a living into something akin to gambling or living by luck. "And it is called enterprise!"[38]

Business culture is distorting the meaning of freedom itself, for it sees freedom merely in political terms—as freedom from colonial rule. America escaped colonial rule only to come under the rule of "an economical and moral tyrant"—business. To be "born free," warns Thoreau, is not the same as "living free." Political freedom, in its full sense, should mean "moral freedom," that is, "the freedom to be free."[39] Instead of leading to full freedom, political freedom has led to the new economic slavery to business.

36. Henry David Thoreau, "Life without Principle," in *The Portable Thoreau*, p. 632.

37. Ibid., p. 634.

38. Ibid., p. 639.

39. Ibid., p. 650.

At the root of the all-consuming devotion to trade, commerce, manufacture, and agriculture is the marginalization of the soul. The soul does not get its due share in the new culture. "There is a part of us which is not represented," Thoreau laments. "It is taxation without representation."[40] Because of this, life in the world of business culture lacks a solid foundation. Though we select granite stones for the foundations of our dwellings, "we do not ourselves rest on an underpinning of granitic truth."[41] We do not "worship truth, but the reflection of truth."[42] The outcome of all this is that there is no inwardness to life. As our inward life fails, our dependence on trivialities increases in the same proportion. Conversation degenerates into gossip. We have no time to listen ourselves.[43] We are industrious, yet we do not spend our time well.[44]

One of the worst effects of modern business culture has been on journalism. Newspapers reflect the values of the business world. Thoreau finds it "too much to read one newspaper per week." The news the papers print is not news but "the stalest repetition." Newspapers trivialize life issues. The stratum of human experience with which they are concerned is thinner than the paper on which the news is printed.[45] The "facts" they print appear to float in the atmosphere, "insignificant as the sporules of fungi," and impinge only on "the surface of our minds."[46] They threaten "the mind's chastity."[47]

The impact of modern business culture on politics is perhaps greatest. Politics lacks "a high and earnest purpose." It is interested more in potatoes than in culture. Though it ought to be a part of "the vital functions

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., p. 644.

42. Ibid., p. 650.

43. Ibid., p. 645.

44. Ibid., p. 636.

45. Ibid., p. 646.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., p. 647.

of human society," in a culture dominated by business, it produces a sort of social dyspepsia. It is, "as it were, the grizzard of society, full of grit and gravel, and the two political parties are its opposite halves. . . . Not only individuals, but states, have thus confirmed dyspepsia."[48]

Although the tone of "Life without Principle" is negative, its overall aim is positive—to appeal to its readers to find a cure for the malaise spreading through American culture. The cure must involve restoring the balance between material interests and spiritual aspirations. This calls for an inner awareness of the nature of the malady, and a psychological and spiritual self-mobilization. If we have "desecrated ourselves," it is time that we "re-consecrate ourselves." "Read not the Times, read the Eternities." We have to show that we are not all husk and shell but have "tender and living kernel to us."[49]

The question arises as to why Gandhi would recommend this essay to the readers of *Hind Swaraj*. The answer is that the issues it raises were of interest not only to Americans but also to Indians and to people everywhere concerned with the harmful consequences of the domination of modern life by business culture. Thoreau was correct in thinking that this dominance had upset the balance between the interests of the body and those of the soul, between the secular and the spiritual. These ideas resonated with Gandhi, for he too was trying to restore the right balance between artha (politics and economics) and moksha (spiritual transcendence) in India. In the past, India had ascribed undue importance to spirituality to the point of neglecting the economic well-being of the people. One of Gandhi's life missions was to restore the correct balance between the material and spiritual goals of life. He was afraid, however, that Indians were in danger of uncritically adopting the nineteenth-century American model. For those who were tempted, "Life without Principle" had a salutary warning. Gandhi's point was not that India should avoid economic reconstruction. It was that India should embark upon it without losing its

48. Ibid., p. 654.

49. Ibid., p. 649.

balance. Economic development should not lead to a divorce between the secular and the spiritual.

In this respect, Gandhi's own 1916 lecture on the relationship of economic development to spiritual development may be profitably read as a companion piece to "Life without Principle." In that lecture, he raises the question whether spiritual progress increases in the same proportion as economic progress.[50] His answer is that it does not. Economic progress and spiritual progress follow different sets of rules. That is why economic progress does not automatically produce spiritual progress. He makes his point by a masterly analysis of the parable of the rich young man in Mark 10:17–31. The young man, though very rich, is spiritually vacuous. He experiences an inner emptiness despite his wealth—wealth justly acquired, as the parable is careful to point out. Jesus's advice to the young man is that if he is serious about making spiritual progress, he must make a serious adjustment in his life. This, the young man is unwilling to do, and because he cannot make the required change, he goes away grieved. Gandhi's main point here is that all societies that embark on economic development must integrate economic progress with the requirements of spiritual development.

There was no doubt in Gandhi's mind that India needed economic and political development. The question, however, was whether it could be achieved without sacrificing spiritual development. The examples of nineteenth-century Great Britain and the United States were not reassuring. As he states in *Hind Swaraj*, "It would be a folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller would be better than the American Rockefeller."[51] One way to avoid such folly is to learn from Thoreau in "Life without Principle."

## "THE DUTY OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE"

This essay made a lasting impact on Gandhi. The paraphrase of 1907 and *Satyagraha Pamphlet No. 1* of 1919 suggest what he found in it that was

50. For the text of this lecture, see *HS*, pp. 156–64.

51. Ibid., p. 108.

relevant to his purpose. What interested him most was its political theory, particularly the theory of the moral basis of the state. Although the paraphrase and the pamphlet make no mention of the Mexican War, those writings are fully appreciative of the context of the antislavery movement in the United States. "Historians say," the opening page of the paraphrase begins, "that the chief cause of the abolition of slavery in America was Thoreau's imprisonment and the publication by him of the above mentioned book after his release. Both his example and writings are at present exactly applicable to the Indians in the Transvaal."[52]

Four ideas from this essay greatly impressed Gandhi. The first concerns the moral foundation of government and the state. To be strictly just, government must have the sanction of the governed. This idea found its way into the famous "Declaration of Independence" that Gandhi wrote in 1930 to launch the radical phase of the Indian nationalist movement. Indians had a right to choose their own government, and if any government deprived them of that right, they had the right "to alter or abolish it.[53] The second idea concerns the relationship of the individual to the state. In some respects, the individual is subject to the power of the state, but in some other respects, he or she is independent of it. Gandhi agreed with Thoreau that there would never be a truly free and enlightened state until the state recognized the individual as the higher and independent power from which all of its own power and authority are derived and treated him or her accordingly.[54] Possessing "a higher and independent power," the citizen has the right and the duty to resist the state when it acts unjustly.[55]

The role of conscience further strengthens the right to resist the unjust state. Conscience makes us "men" first, and subjects afterward. Actions arising from principles of this sort change things and relations: They are

52. *CW*, 7, p. 217.

53. *CW*, 42, p. 384. It is very likely that Gandhi's language here was influenced by the language of the American Declaration of Independence too.

54. *Satyagraha Pamphlet No. 1*, *CW*, 15, pp. 501–502.

55. Ibid, p. 497.

equivalent to peaceful revolution. A decision based on one's conscience has priority over a decision based on the will of the majority. It is "a great error" to believe that justice prevails in a country in which "everything is decided by a majority vote." It is "mere superstition" to believe that "what is done by the multitude is bound to be right." Conscience, not majorities, should decide what is right and wrong. "Those who obey their sense of justice while holding the reins of government are always found to be in conflict with the state."[56]

The term Gandhi often uses for conscience is "inner voice." Inner voice, according to him, is the voice of truth. We have access to the voice of truth only through relative truth—truth as we see it and as conscience approves it. It is therefore necessary to train ourselves to discern what is true in relative truth, lest we fall into the error of moral subjectivism. The study of moral philosophy, the acquisition of self-discipline, and consultation with persons of moral probity and experience of worldly affairs are necessary to acquire the habit of correct moral discernment. "Definite rules have been laid down to help us realize Truth, and we can know Truth only by following them. Hence, just as we cannot know geometry without studying it, so also it is not possible for anybody to hear the inner voice without the necessary effort and training. Hence, according to my definition, a murderer cannot cite inner voice in defense of his act."[57]

The third idea concerned the need to limit government's power over the citizen. "That government is best which governs least" is the famous motto of Thoreau that Gandhi adopted as his own. The state is, of course, a necessary institution, but there are things that citizens, both individually and in small groups, can achieve without the interference of the state. The following is Gandhi's commentary on Thoreau's motto: "This means that when people come into possession of political power, the interference with the freedom of the people is reduced to a minimum. In other words, a nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much State

56. Gandhi's paraphrase, *CW*, 7, p. 218.

57. *CW*, 56, p. 182.

interference is truly democratic. Where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic in name [only]."[58]

The fourth idea was that the duty to disobey an unjust law requires prompt, concrete action. It is true that a good constitutional state normally provides the means of self-correction. Unfortunately, these means (such as voting) are slow and cumbersome. "When the majority shall at length vote for the abolition of slavery, it will be because there is but little slavery left to be abolished."[59] Mere profession of opposition to injustice is not enough; to be credible, it must be followed by action. "There are thousands who in opinion are opposed to slavery, but act contrary to their view." They sit down "with their hands in their pockets and say that they know not what to do, and do nothing. At the most they give lectures and send petitions. There are nine hundred and ninety nine persons who profess virtue to one virtuous man. Yet he who acts virtuously, though he be the only one, is of far greater worth than those who only profess it."[60] Given this, one should take immediate action and resist unjust laws even if the majority does not join, and even if the action costs dearly in terms of personal suffering, such as imprisonment and loss of income and property. "If there is only one man in Massachusetts who is opposed to slavery, he should effectually withdraw his support from the government, both in person and property, without waiting till there is majority on his side. For, he is not alone. God is ever on his side. Any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already."[61] If only one person in Massachusetts refuses to pay taxes in order to oppose slavery and is incarcerated for it, "it would be the abolition of slavery in America. What is once well done is done for ever." Thoreau's famous dictum that under a government that imprisons any person unjustly, "the true place for a just man is also a prison,"[62] went straight to Gandhi's heart. He believed

58. *CW*, 62, p. 92.

59. *CW*, 7, p. 229.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., p. 230.

that suffering is vindication of the rights of conscience and for the sake of justice has special moral efficacy. Moreover, he linked the voluntary acceptance of his jail term with nonviolence and the ascetic ideal of self-suffering.

> Thoreau in his immortal essay shows that civil disobedience, not violence is the true remedy. In civil disobedience, the resister suffers the consequences of disobedience. This was what Daniel did when he disobeyed the law of the Medes and Persians. That is what John Bunyan did and that is what the *raiyats* [peasants] have done in India from time immemorial. It is the law of our being. Violence is the law of the beast in us. Self-suffering, i.e., civil resistance, is the law of the man in us. It is rarely that the occasion for civil resistance arises in a well-ordered State.[63]

Gandhi readily endorsed the theory that the state's authority over the life, liberty, and property of its citizens is never absolute or unconditional. It is conditional on the state's behavior being just. And the state's behavior is never just when it imprisons a just citizen who justly disobeys specific laws. A corollary to this theory is that the practice of civil disobedience requires an attitude of detachment from the comforts associated with civic life, liberty, and property. A civil disobedient should be prepared to sacrifice these benefits for the sake of justice and to accept gladly the discomforts of prison and the loss of friends, income, and property.

Gandhi was an experienced practitioner of civil disobedience. Between 1908 and 1942 he was imprisoned ten times for a total of about five years and ten months. He found in Thoreau much solace and encouragement. By going to jail, he wrote, Thoreau had "sanctified" his essay. It was written "for all time," and its "incisive logic unanswerable."[64] Again, "As Thoreau has said, loss of liberty, wealth and intense suffering were the

63. *CW*, 16, p. 51.

64. *CW*, 7, pp. 304–305.

only course of honorable conduct under an unjust government."[65] "I think with Thoreau that the citizen who resists the evil government must ignore property rights."[66] "Thoreau told the truth when he said that possession of riches under an evil government was a sin and poverty was a virtue."[67] "Let them remember Thoreau's immortal words that possession is a vice and poverty a virtue in a tyrannical State."[68]

## THE EXTENT OF THOREAU'S IMPACT

Although there is universal agreement on the fact of Thoreau's impact on Gandhi's political thought, there is some difference of opinion about its extent. Gandhi himself made three points on this matter. First, he noted that he started his movement in South Africa a year before he read Thoreau. Therefore, Thoreau did not contribute to its genesis. Second, he maintained that there is a conceptual difference between civil disobedience and satyagraha. Third, he stated that Thoreau's role was to confirm and morally support what Gandhi had already started in South Africa.

Writing to a friend in 1935, Gandhi stated the following:

> The statement that I had derived my idea of civil disobedience from the writings of Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority in South Africa was well advanced before I got the essay of Thoreau on civil disobedience. But the movement was then known as passive resistance. As it was incomplete I had coined the word satyagraha for the Gujarati readers. When I saw the title of Thoreau's great essay, I began the use of this phrase to explain our struggle to English readers. But I found that even civil disobedience failed to convey

65. *CW*, 18, p. 169.

66. *CW*, 33, p. 398.

67. *CW*, 36, p. 105.

68. *CW*, 70, p. 145.

> the full meaning of the struggle. I therefore adopted the phrase civil resistance. Non-violence was always an integral part of our struggle.[69]

As for the origin of the concept of satyagraha, the following is Gandhi's account. In 1906, when the resistance movement against racist legislation in South Africa began, he did not know what to call the movement. "None of us knew what name to give our movement. I then used the term 'passive resistance' in describing it. I did not quite understand the implications of 'passive resistance,' as I called it. I only knew that some new principle had come into being. As the struggle advanced, the phrase 'passive resistance' gave rise to confusion and it appeared shameful to permit this great struggle to be known only by an English name."[70] He therefore invited the readers of *Indian Opinion* to make suggestions. One suggestion was to call it the *sadagraha* movement. *Sad* in Gujarati means "a good cause," and *agraha*, "firmness." Thus, *sadagraha* means "firmness in a good cause." Gandhi was not fully satisfied with this new term either. He changed *sadagraha* to *satyagraha*. *Satya* in Gujarati means "truth," so satyagraha means "firmness in holding on to truth." From January 1908 onward, he called his movement satyagraha and gave up the phrase passive resistance.[71]

The focus of Gandhi's movement, then, was on truth. As he put it, "Civil disobedience is disobedience to untruth, and it becomes 'civil' if it is 'truthful' in its manner."[72] However, at different periods of its development, the Gandhian movement used four different terms to describe itself—satyagraha, passive resistance, civil disobedience, and noncooperation. This caused confusion in the minds of many observers. So to

69. *CW*, 61, p. 401.

70. M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1972), p. 102. The phrase "passive resistance" was used by British nonconformists against the Education Act of 1902 and by British suffragettes (ibid., p. 104).

71. *CW*, 8, p. 23.

72. Ibid., p. 131.

remedy this, Gandhi wrote an article for *Young India* in 1921, which I reproduce here despite its length:

> Satyagraha . . . is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force. It excludes the use of violence, because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and, therefore, is not competent to punish. The word was coined in South Africa to distinguish the non-violent resistance of the Indians of South Africa from the cotemporary "passive resistance" of the suffragettes and others. It is not conceived as a weapon of the weak.
>
> Passive resistance is used in the orthodox English sense and covers the suffragette movement as well as the resistance of the nonconformists. Passive resistance has been conceived and is regarded as a weapon of the weak. Whilst it avoids violence, being not open to the weak, it does not exclude its use if, in the opinion of a passive resister, the occasion demands it. However, it has always been distinguished from armed resistance and its application was at one time confined to Christian martyrs.
>
> Civil disobedience is civil breach of unmoral statutory enactments. The expression was, so far as I am aware, coined by Thoreau to signify his own resistance to the laws of a slave state. He has left a masterly treatise on the duty of civil disobedience. But Thoreau was not perhaps an out-and-out champion of non-violence. Probably, also, Thoreau limited his breach to statutory laws to the revenue law, i.e., payment of taxes,[73] whereas the term "civil disobedience" as practiced in 1919 covered a breach of any statutory and unmoral law. It signified the resister's outlawry in a civil, i.e., non-violent manner. He invoked sanctions of the law and cheerfully suffered imprisonment. It is a branch of satyagraha.

73. I am grateful to Jack Turner for pointing out that Gandhi was incorrect in saying that Thoreau limited his civil disobedience to revenue laws. He assisted many slaves to escape, thus disobeying the Fugitive Slave Law.

> Non-cooperation predominantly implies withdrawing of cooperation from the state that in the non-cooperator's view has become corrupt and excludes civil disobedience of the fierce type described above. By its very nature, non-cooperation is even open to children of understanding and can be safely practiced by the masses. Civil disobedience presupposes the habit of willing obedience to laws without fear of their sanctions. It can therefore be practiced only as a last resort and by a select few in the first instance at any rate. Non-cooperation, too, like civil disobedience is a branch of satyagraha which includes all non-violent resistance for the vindication of Truth."[74]

In a letter written in 1934, Gandhi made further comments on the subject:

> Civil disobedience is not necessarily an accurate expression of the attitude indicated in "civil resistance." "Civil disobedience" may also indicate an attitude of mind. The term "civil disobedience" was first used by Thoreau. I didn't like it because it didn't suggest all that I had in mind. Looking for a new phrase, I fixed upon "civil resistance." The current phrase was "passive resistance." But my way of resistance or the force which I had in mind was not passive. It was active, but "active" might also mean violent. The word "civil" suggests nothing but non-violence. I therefore joined it with "resistance."[75]

In 1942 Gandhi specified the exact nature of Thoreau's influence on him: "through his essay on the 'Duty of Civil Disobedience,'" Thoreau provided "scientific confirmation" of what Gandhi was doing in South Africa.[76]

74. *CW*, 19, p. 466–67.

75. *CW*, 58, p. 54.

76. *CW*, 76, p. 358.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, Richardson's interpretation of Thoreau's influence on Gandhi is untenable. Richardson makes four claims. First, that Thoreau domesticated "into an American context" the Hindu concept of moksha, or final liberation of the spirit. Second, that Thoreau transcended the Hindu view that the quest for moksha requires acquiescence in outward tyranny. Third, that Thoreau gave back to India its own tradition, "improved and made practicable." Finally, that Gandhi's concept of swaraj as expressed in *Hind Swaraj* drew explicitly on Thoreau.[77]

Richardson, in my view, exaggerates the sophistication of Thoreau's knowledge of Hindu philosophy. Because of this, he misjudges the relevance of Thoreau for a helpful understanding of modern India in general and for Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* in particular. It is true that Thoreau had read in translation (early translations, at that) such works as *The Laws of Manu*, parts of *Mahabharata, Vishnu Purana*, the *Samkhya Karika, Kalidasa's Sakuntala*, the *Harivansam*, the *Sama Veda*, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*.[78] In "Walking" he appears to endorse the traditional view of *Vishnu Purana* that the pursuit of artha (politics and economics) is incompatible with the pursuit of spiritual liberation or moksha.[79] His praise of *The Laws of Manu*, a work that represents social hierarchy in its most oppressive form, is indicative of his limited understanding of the impact of its teachings on Indian society. One has only to contrast Thoreau's admiration for *The Laws of Manu* with its public burning in India in 1927 by the followers of A. R. Ambedkar, the Columbia University educated jurist, political thinker, leader of the much despised Untouchables, and future chairman of the drafting committee of India's modern constitution (1950).

Ultimately, Gandhi took no note of Thoreau's comments on Hindu philosophy. His deep and enduring appreciation of Thoreau was based

77. Richardson, *Henry Thoreau*, pp. 316–17.

78. Ibid., pp. 106–109, 204–209.

79. Thoreau, "Walking," pp. 623–24.

solely on his political essays. Thoreau had nothing to do with Gandhi's interpretation of the meaning of swaraj as it appears in *Hind Swaraj*.[80]

## THOREAU AND GANDHI: A COMPARISON

Although there are many points in common between these two thinkers, there are also some interesting differences. This makes them apt subjects for comparative political thought. The conceptual differences between civil disobedience and satyagraha have already been noted. There are three other points on which Thoreau and Gandhi can be compared. They concern the relationship of civil disobedience or satyagraha to social reform, violence, and virtue.

With regard to the relationship of civil disobedience to social reform, Thoreau saw very clearly the need for the abolition of slavery. Some critics still debate the extent of Thoreau's commitment to reform, despite the collection of his writings titled *Reform Papers*, and even though the two essays Gandhi honored include the issue of reform.[81] There is no question that Thoreau was dissatisfied with slavery, and that American society was in need of internal reform. As noted in "Walking," the reform of the individual is the key to the reform of society. The individual must experience true inner freedom. While in "Walking" true freedom is found only in "wildness" and retreat from society and polity, as Gougeon points out, Thoreau finally came to the conclusion that the reform of individuals through self-culture can occur only in a well-ordered polity that guarantees personal freedom.[82]

In Gandhi's mind, there was no doubt whatsoever about the necessary connection between civil disobedience and social reform, or what he called "constructive program." In 1945 he published a thesis titled *Constructive*

80. For Gandhi's meaning of swaraj in *Hind Swaraj*, see the chapter "Two Meanings of Swaraj" in this volume.

81. For a survey of the debate, see Gougeon, "Thoreau and Reform," pp. 194–96.

82. Ibid., p. 196.

*Programme: Its Meaning and Place.*[83] In the Gandhi corpus, its importance is second only to that of *Hind Swaraj.* Its main argument is that social reform, carried out by voluntary organizations, plays an indispensable role in a free society. Voluntary organizations are better equipped to bring about certain types of social reform than are the agencies of the state. The greater the number of nonviolent voluntary agencies in a society, the less violent that society will be, and the less dependent on the state the citizens will be. Voluntary agencies hold the key to creating a government that governs the least. The constructive program, according to Gandhi, represents the positive side of politics, while satyagraha represents its negative side. Satyagraha is protest politics. But a society cannot live by protest alone. Its normal life must be lived by constructive citizenship. Thus, satyagraha is not the whole of Gandhi's politics; it is only one part of his broader vision of politics. As he puts it, satyagraha is for rare occasions and for the few, while the constructive program is for always and to be carried out by everyone.[84] The metaphor of the paralyzed hand attempting to lift a spoon, which he uses toward the end of *Constructive Programme*, says it all: "For my handling of civil disobedience without the constructive program will be like a paralyzed hand attempting to lift a spoon."[85]

A second area of comparison concerns their respective stands on nonviolence. As Jack Turner has argued, Thoreau believes that liberators of society may resort to revolutionary violence on the basis of natural right. A "contingent willingness" to kill or be killed in resistance to political evil is consistent with Thoreau's philosophy. Thoreau does not stand in the way of morally concerned citizens who want to end the state's monopoly of legitimate violence.[86]

Gandhi's concept of nonviolence recognizes the right to use legitimate violence in self-defense both private and public. However, in the exercise

83. For the text, see *CW*, 75, pp. 146–66.

84. *CW*, 75, p. 61.

85. Ibid., p. 166.

86. Jack Turner, "Performing Conscience: Thoreau, Political Action and the Plea for John Brown," in *Political Theory* 33, 2005, pp. 459–62.

of satyagraha this right does not and may not come into play. His famous definition of satyagraha makes this clear enough. "Passive resistance [satyagraha] is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force."[87] Gandhi staked his reputation as an original political thinker on this specific issue. Hitherto, violence had been used in the name of political rights, such as in street riots, regicide, or armed revolutions. Gandhi believes there is a better way of securing political rights, that of nonviolence, and that this new way marks an advance in political ethics. With regard to the narrow issue of securing rights in open, free, democratic societies, he was absolutely opposed to the use of violence.

The third area of comparison between Thoreau and Gandhi concerns the role of virtue in resistance politics or satyagraha. Here again, a distinction between the two is necessary as far as Gandhi is concerned. Those who wanted to practice satyagraha in the heroic sense were expected to practice four specific virtues—chastity, voluntary poverty, truthfulness, and fearlessness.[88] Others who practiced satyagraha for reasons of expediency were not bound by these virtues, even though the virtue of nonviolence was obligatory. Chastity and truthfulness are included in this list in deference to Indian moral philosophy. "Chastity," writes Gandhi, "is one of the greatest disciplines without which the mind cannot attain firmness."[89] As for voluntary poverty, "pecuniary ambition" and civil disobedience in the heroic sense do not go well together. No one is expected to throw money away, but a practitioner of satyagraha is expected "to be indifferent to it." Finally, the civil disobedient has to have the virtue of courage so that he or she may be free from the fear of losing friends, relatives, property, and even life itself.[90]

87. *HS*, p. 90.

88. See ibid., pp. 96–99.

89. Ibid., p. 97.

90. Ibid., p. 98.

Thoreau does not write systematically on the need for virtue. However, it is clear, for example, in "Life without Principle," that one of his criticisms of modern capitalist culture is its disregard for moral virtue. And who can forget the distinction he draws in "The Duty of Civil Disobedience" between "the nine hundred and ninety nine" patrons of virtue and "one virtuous man"? As noted earlier, one of the attributes of character that attracted Gandhi to Thoreau was his moral earnestness.

I conclude with an evaluation of the broader contributions these two thinkers have made to the field of comparative political thought. Thoreau made two contributions in this regard. The first is his lasting impact on Gandhi's political thought through the three essays discussed in this chapter. The second is his signal to future generations of American intellectuals that they should take a serious interest in Indian thought. Even though this interest did not influence Gandhi in any way—or modern Indian political thought, for that matter—it nevertheless sets a very good example for his compatriots. It reminds them that to be well educated in the contemporary world, it is no longer sufficient to be conversant with the political philosophy of one's own culture. To be politically literate in today's world, one must cross canonical boundaries and engage in serious comparative political thought. Thoreau was a pioneer in this regard. Accordingly, his contributions in this area should be evaluated not in terms of the depth of his knowledge of Indian thought but in terms of his recognition of the need to learn from Indian thought.

Gandhi made a similar contribution to comparative political thought. He taught his Indian compatriots how to cross the canonical boundaries of their own culture and absorb new ideas from America and elsewhere without losing their intellectual identity. The story of the transformation of civil disobedience or passive resistance into satyagraha is a story of how to practice comparative political thought in our times. Crossing canonical boundaries does not mean or require abandoning one's canon. It means updating it and making it relevant to modern times. Gandhi was able to integrate what was universal in Thoreau's essays into the new Indian canon without undermining the

latter's integrity. Here I must refer once again to appendix 1 of *Hind Swaraj*, a major text of the new Indian political canon. It invites Indians to integrate the thoughts of such Western authors as Plato, Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, and others within the framework of the new Indian canon. Gandhi's mode of comparative political thought has universal application.

# GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| Adivasis | The Aboriginal tribes of India. |
| Advaita | Nonduality, a school of Hindu philosophy. |
| Artha | Wealth; one of the four *purusharthas*. |
| Atman | The immortal spirit, the spiritual foundation of human personality. |
| Bhagya | Fate, destiny. |
| Dalits | The oppressed; the so-called Untouchables in the caste hierarchy. |
| Dhamma | The Buddhist version of dharma. |
| Dharma | Duty, ethics, religion; one of the four *purusharthas*. |
| Ek-praja | One nation. |
| Hindutva | Hinduness, a political ideology. |
| Kama | Sexual desire; extended meaning includes aesthetics; one of the four *purusharthas*. |
| Khadi (also khaddar) | Home spun cloth, made famous by Gandhi. |
| Moksha | Spiritual liberation from life cycle; one of the four *purusharthas*. |
| Nivriti | Cessation from activities. |
| Praja | Nation. |
| Pravriti | Activities directed toward attaining spiritual liberation. |
| Purna swaraj | Sovereign political independence. |
| Purusha | Man; spirit or the animating principle of a human being; Supreme Being of the universe. |
| Purushartha(s) | Any one of the four ends of existence; human effort or exertion. That which distinguishes humans from other animals. |
| Sadharan dharma | The universally valid principles of dharma. |
| Sadhu | A holy man. |
| Samas | A grammatical technique of coining new words from two or more words of the same language. |
| Sannyas | The final stage of renunciation of worldly pursuits. |
| Sannyasi | A person who is in the final stage of renunciation of worldly pursuits. |
| Sarvodaya | The welfare of all; the name under which Gandhi's economic philosophy is known. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Satyagraha | Nonviolent way of securing rights against an oppressive custom or law. |
| Seva | The ethic of service. |
| Surajya | A good state or country. |
| Swadeshi | Neighborliness; regard for what is of one's own country. |
| Swadharma | The dharma required by one's caste; by extension, the duties of one's situation in life. |
| Swaraj | Self-rule, applied to individuals; sovereign independence, applied to countries. |
| Varna | The hierarchical caste order. |
| Vedanta | A school of Hindu philosophy. |
| Yagna | Ritual sacrifice. |
| Zamindar | A land owner with privileges over tenants. |

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Transcribed by Mrs. Mary Dennisony

Arguing against scholars who dispute a theoretical unity in Gandhi's writings, Parel suggests that Gandhi is the preeminent non-western political philosopher, and in this book he seeks to identify the conceptual framework of Gandhi's political philosophy, the *Pax Gandhiana*.

**ANTHONY J. PAREL** is Emeritus Professor of Political Science at University of Calgary.

"Anthony Parel is fresh but also persuasive in his argument that Gandhi the thinker or political philosopher may be even more significant than the better known Gandhi of action who led India's independence movement, demonstrated that nonviolence works better than violence, and sought to reconcile India's diverse groups." —**RAJMOHAN GANDHI**, author of *Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, His People and an Empire*

"Mohandas K. Gandhi displayed more philosophic complexity than any other national leader on the twentieth century stage. It is difficult to fully and coherently explain his political philosophy. Thankfully, we have Professor Anthony Parel, the distinguished Gandhi scholar, to do that job—and to do it exceedingly well. He succeeds here in opening up a wide avenue of understanding by bringing to bear on this subject a lifetime of careful study and a vast storehouse of wisdom. Scholars seeking to come to grips with Gandhi will find in Professor Parel's book a singular work that is sweeping in its scope, unique in its perspective, and masterful in its analysis. It is a comprehensive, authoritative, and brilliant guide." —**CHARLES R. DISALVO**, author of *M.K. Gandhi, Attorney at Law: The Man before the Mahatma*

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